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THE GIFT OF
Victor F. Brown

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MY SERMON NOTES

A SELECTION

FROM

OUTLINES OF DISCOURSES

DELIVERED AT

The Metropolitan Tabernacle

BY

C. H. SPURGEON

FROM GENESIS TO PROVERBS. I. TO LXIV

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PREFACE.

It is not always easy to select themes for sermons. Even those who are able to give all their time to reading and study are sometimes glad of a suggestion by which they are directed to a topic; how much more is this the case when a man is all the week engaged in commercial pursuits, and then has to preach twice on the Lord's-day! These are called lay-brethren by those who believe in a special priesthood; I can only say that whatever they are called they are among the right honorables of the pulpit. Frequently have brethren assured me of the difficulty they have found in choosing a text when they could only get a brief interval to themselves, and that at a time when they were well-nigh worn out. On several occasions the question has been put to me, "Could you not help us with some outlines of discourses?" To which I have replied that there were many works of that kind in the market. The reply has been that they would like something plainer and less rhetorical. I felt encouraged by their request to try what could be done in the direction indicated.

I have prepared these frameworks, not to encourage indolence, but to help bewildered industry; and I hope that I have not written so much as to enable any man to preach without thought, nor so little as to leave a weary mind without help.

So far as I remember, none of these outlines have been in the printer's hands before. They are notes of sermons which have not been included in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. Certain of them may have been printed in provincial news-

papers, or in magazines, or even in some of my own volumes; but I do not think so.

My actual notes were a little too scanty to be understood by any one but myself, and therefore I have filled them up. The front of an ordinary envelope has frequently sufficed to hold my memoranda; but now that I find it needful to write in a bolder hand, I use the half of a sheet of note paper. I sometimes wish that I had never used even this; for the memory loves to be trusted, and the more fully it is relied upon the more does it respond to our confidence. The preachers who can entirely dispense with notes must be few; but, if their preaching is up to the mark, they are happy men. Some go on crutches, and read almost all the sermon; this, as a rule, must be a lame business. The most of us need to carry a staff, even if we do not often lean upon it. The perfectly able man requires nothing of the kind. I am not one of these first-class brethren; "with my staff have I crossed this Jordan," and I hereby lend it to any who feel that they can pursue their journey by its aid.

It is on my mind to prepare four of these half-crown volumes, two upon the Old Testament and two upon the New. I shall see how far the first two are accepted by my brethren, and shall then, as health and time may permit me, proceed to the others. Already I have sent forth three volumes, similar in form and price to the present work, for the help of students and ministers—I allude to the two series of "Lectures to my Students" and "Commenting and Commentaries;" and these have enjoyed so large a circulation, that I am encouraged to add to my little library of preachers' books. May they all prove to be of real service, and I shall be well content.

Added to my Sermon-Notes are certain pieces of my own, or extracts from the works of others, which are intended to brighten up the sermon. An anecdote or illustration throws a little color into a discourse, and wins attention; but the weary ones for whom this book is mainly meant do not know where to find the anecdote or simile, and are as much in need of help

in this direction as in the division of the subject. I had not proceeded far before I found that this additional work involved great toil, and it was a glad relief to me when I met with an invaluable assistant in Pastor W. H. J. Page, of Chelsea, who has enriched my pages from the stores of a Commonplace Book, which he has been wise enough to keep up from year to year. I am glad to acknowledge his aid, most lovingly rendered; it has not made me give less of my own, but it has enabled me to fill up where nothing original presented itself to me.

As we pour a little water down a pump to help it to draw up a stream from below, so may "My Sermon-Notes" refresh many a jaded mind, and then set it working so as to develop its own resources. May the Holy Spirit use these outlines for the help of His busy servants. To Him shall be all the praise, and to His Church the profit. What are we without Him? What is impossible to us when He is with us? May those brethren who use this small selection of topics enjoy the Lord's presence in so doing.

WESTWOOD,
October, 1884.

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MY SERMON-NOTES.

I.

Gen. xix. 15.—"When the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot."

Were these personages angels, or divine appearances? It matters not: they were messengers sent from God to save. In any case they teach us how to deal with men if we are to arouse and bless them. We must go to their homes—"They turned in unto Lot" (verse 3); they stated the case—"The Lord will destroy this city" (verse 14); they urged and persuaded—"Up, get you out of this place;" and they resorted to a loving violence—"The men laid hold upon his hand," etc. (verse 16). Picture the two angels with all their four hands occupied in leading out Lot and his wife and his two daughters.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS NEED TO BE HASTENED.

1. *In what?* In matters of obedience to their Lord. Few can say, "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

   In coming out from the world. "He lingered." "His wife looked back" (verse 26). The urgency of the command which says—"Come ye out from among them; be ye separate," shows how loath we are to "rise up and come away."

   In seeking the good of their families. "Hast thou here any besides?" (verse 12).

In general quickness of movement in spiritual things. "Escape for thy life" (verse 17). "Haste thee" (verse 22).

2. *Why?* The flesh is weak. Lot was an old man, too much tinctured with worldliness, and he was away from Abraham, the nobler spirit, who had helped to keep him right.

Perseverance is difficult. "I cannot escape to the mountain."

Sodom has a sluggish influence. We often traverse the "Enchanted ground," where sleep seizes on the traveller.

When our worldly occupation is incessant, and takes up most of our thoughts, we are hindered from decision.

Idle leisure is still worse. Men with nothing to do in the world seldom do anything in religion.

3. *By what means?* By reminding them of their obligations, their opportunities, and the days already wasted.

By leading them to consider the flight of time and brevity of life.

By warning them of the sure ruin of their impenitent friends.

By setting before them the fact that delay in duty is sin, and leads to other sins.

II. THE SINNERS NEED TO BE HASTENED.

1. *Sinners are very slow, and apt to linger.*

They have settled down in the Sodom of sin. Like the sluggard, they desire "a little more folding of the arms to sleep."

They are bound by many ties to the City of Destruction.

They do not believe our warning. "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (verse 14).

They trifle with our message when they dare not contradict it.

Delay is Satan's grand device for their ruin.

Procrastination baffles our persuasions. Delays act like bales of wool dropped over the wall of a besieged city to deaden the blows of a battering-ram. Felix quieted his conscience by the idea of "a more convenient season."

2. *Our business is to hasten them.*

We must be in earnest ourselves, as these angels were.

We must also be patient, and repeat our pleadings.

We must be resolute, and lay hold on their hands.

3. *We have many arguments with which to hasten them.*

May the Holy Spirit make them see:

Their imminent danger while lingering.

The sin of loitering when God commands them to escape for their lives.

The fitness of the present above any possible future.

The uncertainty that any available future will come.

The supreme necessity of immediate decision with some; for it may be "now or never" with them: they will "die in their sins" if they do not hear the voice of God to-day.

ILLUSTRATIVE ODDS AND ENDS.

A Christian tradesman bethought him that he had never spoken to a certain regular customer about his soul, though the man had called at his shop for years. He determined to plead earnestly with him the next time he came in his way. *There was no next time:* his customer died suddenly, so that he saw him no more.

When a young man made an open profession of the gospel, his father, greatly offended, gave him this advice: "James, you should *first* get yourself established in a good trade, and

then think of the matter of religion." "Father," said the son, "Jesus Christ advises me differently; he says, 'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God.'"

Earnestly may we urge men to seek a present salvation, since even the voluptuary pleads against delay in such words as these:

"Oh, gather roses while they blow,
To-morrow's not to-day;
Let not one moment vainly flow,
Time fleeth fast away."

Much of the beauty of obedience lies in its being rendered at once, and without question. God's will is done in heaven immediately, because love is perfect there. That child is disobedient who is slow in obeying.

"Brother," said a dying man, "why have you not been more pressing with me about my soul?" "Dear James," replied the brother, "I have spoken to you several times." "Yes," was the answer, "you are not to blame; but you were always so quiet over it; I wish you had gone on your knees to me, or had taken me by the neck and shaken me, for I have been careless, and have nearly slept myself into hell."

The poor needle-woman with her inch of candle has work to finish. See how her fingers fly, for she fears lest she should be left in darkness, and her work undone.

Some Christians are slow to obey a command *because it has not been laid home to their hearts with power.* Fancy a child saying this to a father, or a soldier to his officer! Something else would soon be laid home with power.

Do not some professors cause sinners to loiter by their own loitering? A man taking a seat at the Tabernacle came to the minister and said, "Sir, do I understand that if I become a seat-holder I shall be expected to be converted?" "Yes," was the reply; "I hope you will, and I pray that it may be so. Do you object?" The answer was, "Oh, sir, I desire it above

everything." Was not the man hastened by the general feeling of hopefulness which pervaded the Church? Assuredly there is much in the atmosphere which surrounds a man. Among warm-hearted Christians it is hard for the careless to remain indifferent.

II.

Gen. xxxii. 28.—"As a prince hast thou power with God."

Power with God is a sublime attainment: it leads to the possession of every form of power. No wonder that it is added "and with men." When Jacob had prevailed with God he had no reason to fear Esau. Observe that it is the power of a single individual, exhibited in a time of deep distress: how much more power will be found where two or three agree in prayer! Let us note:

I. WHAT THIS POWER CANNOT BE.

Cannot be physical force. "Hast thou an arm like God?" Job xl. 9.

Cannot be mental energy. "Declare if thou hast understanding." Job xxxviii. 4.

Cannot be magical. Some seem to fancy that prayers are charms, but this is idle. "He maketh diviners mad." Isaiah xliv. 25. "Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." Matt. vi. 7.

Cannot be meritorious. "Is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Job xxii. 3. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?" Job xxxv. 7.

Cannot be independent. It must be given by the Lord. "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me." Job xxiii. 6.

II. WHENCE THIS POWER PROCEEDS.

1. It arises from the Lord's nature: his goodness and tenderness are excited by the sight of our sorrow and

weakness. A soldier about to kill a child put aside his weapon when the little one cried out, "Don't kill me, I am so little."

2. It comes out of God's promise. In his covenant, in the gospel, and in the Word, the Lord puts himself under bonds to those who know how to plead his truth and faithfulness. "Put me in remembrance; let us plead together." Is. xliii. 26.
3. It springs out of the relationships of grace. A father will surely hear his own children. A friend will be true to his friend. Story of the power of a child in Athens who ruled his mother and through her his father who was the chief magistrate, and so controlled the whole city; love thus made a babe to have power over a prince and his people. The love of God to us is our power with him.
4. It grows out of the Lord's previous acts. His election of his people is a power with him since he is unchanging in his purposes. Redemption, regeneration, calling, communion, are all arguments for our final preservation, for mercy will not forsake that which wisdom has commenced. Each blessing draws on another like links of a chain. Past mercies are the best of pleas for present and future aid.

III. How can it be exercised.

1. There must be a deep sense of weakness. "When I am weak then am I strong." 2 Cor. xii. 10.
2. There must be simple faith in the goodness of the Lord. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also." John xiv. 12. Faith is the prevailing grace,

> "It treads on the world, and on hell;
> It vanquishes death and despair:
> And, what is still stranger to tell,
> It overcomes heaven by prayer."

3. There must be earnest obedience to his will. "If any man doeth his will, him he heareth." John ix. 31.
4. There must be fixed resolve. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (verse 26).
5. With this must be blended importunity. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (verse 24).
6. The whole heart must be poured out. "Yea he wept and made supplication." Hos. xii. 4.
7. Increased weakness must not make us cease. Jacob was lame, yet he prevailed. "The lame take the prey." Is. xxxiii. 23.

IV. To WHAT USE THIS POWER MAY BE TURNED.

1. For ourselves.
   For our own deliverance from special trial.
   Our honorable preferment. "Thy name shall be called Israel."
   Our future comfort, strength, and growth, when, like Jacob, we are called to successive trials.
2. For others.
   Jacob's wives and children were preserved, and Esau's heart was softened. If we had more power with God we should have a happier influence among our relatives.
   In other instances, Abraham, Job, Moses, Samuel, Paul etc., exercised power with God for the good of others.
   We shall win souls for Jesus by this power. He that has power with God for men will have power with men for God.
   Oh, for a holy ambition to possess power with God!
   If we have it, let us not lose it, but exercise it continually.
   How terrible to have no power with God, but to be fighting against him with our puny arm!

Notes for Brightening.

Jacob, though a man, a single man, a travelling man, a tired man, yea, though a worm, that is easily crushed and trodden under foot, and no man (Is. xli. 14), yet in private prayer he is so potent, that he overcomes the Omnipotent God; he is so mighty, that he overcomes the Almighty.—*Thomas Brooks.*

A stern father has been conquered by a tear in the eye of his daughter. An unwilling heart has relented and bestowed an alms at the sight of the disappointment caused by a refusal. Sorrow constrains to pity. When importunity takes the hand of grief, and the two go together to the gate of mercy, it opens of its own accord. Sincerity, earnestness, perseverance, confidence, and expectancy are all potent instruments of power with God.

How often have I seen a little child throw its arms around its father's neck, and win, by kisses and importunities and tears, what had else been refused! Who has not yielded to importunity, even when a dumb animal looked up in our face with suppliant eyes for food? Is God less pitiful than we?—*Dr. Guthrie.*

It were easy here to expatiate into a large history of the great exploits which prayer is renowned for in Holy Writ. This is the key that has opened and again shut heaven. It hath vanquished mighty armies, and unlocked such secrets as passed the skill of the very Devil himself to find out. It hath strangled desperate plots in the very womb wherein they were conceived; and made those engines of cruelty prepared against the saints recoil upon the inventors of them; so that they have inherited the gallows which they did set up for others. At the knock of prayer prison-doors have opened, the grave hath delivered up its dead; and the sea's leviathan, not able to digest his prey, hath been made to vomit it up again. It hath stopped the sun's chariot in the heavens, yea, made it to go

back. And that which surpasseth all, it hath taken hold of the Almighty, when on his full march against persons and people, and hath put him to a merciful retreat.—*W. Gurnall.*

In a certain town (says the Rev. Mr. Finney) there had been no revival for many years; the church was nearly run out, the youth were all unconverted, and desolation reigned unbroken. There lived in a retired part of the town an aged man, a blacksmith by trade, and of so stammering a tongue that it was painful to hear him speak. On one Friday, as he was at work in his shop alone, his mind became greatly exercised about the state of the church, and of the impenitent. His agony became so great, that he was induced to lay aside his work, lock the shop door, and spend the afternoon in prayer. He prevailed, and on the Sabbath called in the minister and desired him to appoint a conference meeting. After some hesitation, the minister consented, observing, however, that he feared but few would attend. He appointed it the same evening, at a large private house. When evening came, more assembled than could be accommodated in the house. All were silent for a time, until one sinner broke out in tears, and said, if any one could pray, he begged him to pray for *him*. Another followed, and another, and still another, until it was found that persons from every quarter of the town were under deep convictions. And what was remarkable, was that they all dated their conviction at the hour when the old man was praying in his shop. A powerful revival followed. Then this old stammering man prevailed, and as a prince, had power with God.

III.

Gen. xxxii. 29.—"He blessed him there."

The main thing is to get a blessing. The angel did not gratify Jacob's curiosity when he asked his name; but he did bless him. May the same be the case with us at this time; even as it was with the disciples when they asked, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" and the Lord replied, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you." We need not know the future, but we do need power for the present.

I. What was Jacob's blessing in that place? "He blessed him."

1. He was saved from a great peril. Esau's attack. "For I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children" (verse 11).
2. He was forgiven a great wrong. His supplanting of Esau was condoned by his brother.
3. He was able to feel that a great breach was healed. "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." Gen. xxxiii. 4.
4. He had won a new name and rank (verse 28). He was knighted on the spot, made a prince on the field.
5. He was now under a fresh anointing: he was a superior man ever after. "The angel redeemed him from all evil." Gen. xlviii. 16.

II. What was the place? "He blessed him there."

1. A place of great trial (verses 6 and 7).

2. A place of humble confession. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed to thy servant" (verse 10).
3. A place of pleading (verses 11 and 12). "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (verse 24).
4. A place of communion. "I have seen God face to face" (verse 30).
5. A place of conscious weakness. "As he passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

All this is full of instruction to us, for we read in Hos. xii. 4, "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, *and there he spake with us.*"

III. ARE THERE OTHER SUCH PLACES?

1. Before the earth was created the Lord blessed his chosen people in Christ Jesus. Eph. i. 3, 4.
   See also Matt. xxv. 34: "Come, ye blessed of my Father," etc.
2. At the cross, the tomb, and the throne of Jesus. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. xxii. 18.
3. In the heavenly places. "And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. ii. 6.
4. At conversion. "From this day will I bless you." "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven," etc. Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.
5. In times of stripping, humbling, chastening, pleading, etc. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," etc. James i. 12.
6. In times of prompt obedience. "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord," etc. Ps. i. "In keeping of them there is great reward."
7. At the ordinances. Acts viii. 39. Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

IV. IS THIS SUCH A PLACE?

Yes, if you are:

Willing to give up sin.
Willing to have Jesus for your all in all.
Willing to resign yourself to the Father's will.
Willing to serve God in his own way.

Go not away without a saving blessing. Believe for it. Wrestle for it. Only the Lord can give it, look to him alone for the blessing. What are means of grace unless the Lord blesses them, and blesses you in the use of them?

REMARKS AND INCIDENTS.

This blessing wherewith Christ here blessed Jacob was a divine blessing containing all other blessings within its bowels. It was that blessing of the *throne* which comprehended in it the blessings of the *foot-stool*. Jacob had got already a great store of foot-stool mercies—much wealth, wives and children, etc. These worldly blessings would not (and indeed could not) content him: he tugs hard still, and must have some better mercy than these, even the *throne* mercy, to wit, peace with God; well knowing that this would bring peace with his brother, and all other good things; as Job saith, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." Job xxii. 21. He knew that his power to prevail with Emmanuel himself would fill him with power to prevail with Esau.—*Christopher Ness.*

It was with a young man a day of seeking, and he entered a little sanctuary and heard a sermon from "Look unto me and be ye saved." He obeyed the Lord's command, and *he blessed him there.* Soon after he made a profession of his faith before many witnesses, declaring his consecration to the Lord, and *he blessed him there.* Anon he began to labor for the Lord in little rooms, among a few people, and *he blessed him there.* His opportunities enlarged, and by faith he ventured upon daring

things for the Lord's sake, and *he blessed him there.* A household grew about him, and together with his loving wife he tried to train his children in the fear of the Lord, and *he blessed him there.* Then came sharp and frequent trial, and he was in pain and anguish, but *the Lord blessed him there.* This is that man's experience all along, from the day of his conversion to this hour: up hill and down dale his path has been a varied one, but for every part of his pilgrimage he can praise the Lord, for "*he blessed him there.*"

I have here (said Mr. Fuller) two religious characters, who were intimately acquainted in early life. Providence favored one of them with a tide of prosperity. The other, fearing for his friend, lest his heart should be overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, one day asked him whether he did not find prosperity a snare to him. He paused and answered, "I am not conscious that I do, for I enjoy God in all things." Some years afterward his affairs took another turn; he lost, if not the whole, yet the far greater part of what he had once gained, and by this disaster was greatly reduced. His old friend being one day in his company, renewed his question, whether he did not find what had lately befallen him to be too much for him. Again he paused and answered, "I am not conscious that I do, for now I enjoy all things in God." This was truly a life of faith. To him it was as true as to Jacob. "*He blessed him there.*"—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

IV.

Gen. xxxiii. 9, 11.—"Esau said, I have enough." "Jacob said, I have enough."

It is as rare as it is pleasing to meet with a man who has enough; the great majority are craving for more. Here we see two persons who were content. It is true they were both wealthy men, but these are often more greedy than the poor. To increase the wonder, we have here not only two men, but two brothers, and two brothers of dissimilar disposition, each saying "I have enough." Where shall we find two brothers like them? Surely their father's blessing was upon these contented twins. They were great wonders.

I. HERE IS AN UNGODLY MAN WHO HAS ENOUGH.

Because Esau has other faults, there is no necessity that he should be discontented and grasping: contentment is a moral excellence as much as a spiritual grace. Unconverted men are sometimes contented with their lot in this life.

1. It is not always or often so: they are mostly a dissatisfied company.
2. It is sometimes so; as in the case of Esau.
   This may arise from a want of energy.
   Or from a naturally easy disposition, readily pleased.
   Or from utter recklessness which only considers present pleasure.
3. It has some good points about it.
   As preventing greed and the oppression which comes of it.

As often promoting a good-natured liberality, and the disposition to "live and let live."

4. Yet it has its evil side.

It leads men to boast of their wealth or acquirements who would not do so if they were craving for more.

It tends to breed a contempt for spiritual riches.

It may thus be a sign of having one's portion in this life.

II. HERE IS A GODLY MAN WHO HAS ENOUGH.

1. It is a pity that this is not true of every Christian man. Some appear to be eager after the world though they profess to be separated from it. This creates care, fretfulness, envy of heart and leanness of soul.
2. It is delightful to have enough. Contentment surpasses riches.
3. It is pleasant to have somewhat to spare for the poor; and this should be the aim of our labor: the apostle says (Eph. iv. 28), "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, *that he may have to give to him that needeth.*"
4. It is blessed to have all this through our God. Jacob said, "God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough."
5. It is best of all to have all things. In the margin we read that Jacob said, "I have all things." "All things are yours." 1 Cor. iii. 22.

All that the believer needs is promised in the Covenant.

All things in providence work together for his good.

In having God for his portion he has more than all.

Thus he has enough of strength and grace. Enough in Christ, in the Word, and in the Spirit. Enough in God's love, power and faithfulness, and an immeasurable supply in God himself, whose name is "God All-sufficient."

The child of God should be ashamed of discontent, since even a common sinner may be free from it.

He should be heartily satisfied; for he has all things, and what more can he desire? "O rest in the Lord." Ps. xxxvii. 7.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

A poor Christian woman, who was breaking her fast upon a crust and a cup of water, exclaimed, "What! All this and Christ too!"

A Puritan preacher asking a blessing on a herring and potatoes, said, "Lord, we thank thee that thou hast ransacked sea and land to find food for thy children."

The great cry with everybody is, "Get on! get on!" just as if the world were travelling post. How astonished these people will be, if they arrive in heaven, to find the angels, who are much wiser than they, laying no schemes to be made archangels!—*Maxims for Meditation.*

Is not the bee as well contented with feeding on the dew, or sucking from a flower, as the ox that grazeth on the mountains? Contentment lies within a man, *in the heart;* and the way to be comfortable is not by having our barrels filled, but our minds quieted. The contented man (saith Seneca) is the happy man. . . . Discontent robs a man of the power to enjoy what he possesses. A drop or two of vinegar will sour a whole glass of wine.—*T. Watson.*

As a typical instance of the contentment of some unregenerate persons, note the following: "A captain of a whale-ship told one of the wretched natives of Greenland that he sincerely pitied the miserable life to which he was condemned. 'Miserable!' exclaimed the savage. 'I have always had a fish-bone through my nose, and plenty of train-oil to drink: what more could I desire?'"

V.

Gen. xxxiii. 13.—"And he said unto him, My Lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die."

Jacob could have kept pace with Esau had he been alone, but not with so many children and flocks. He did not expect Esau to travel at the slow rate which he was obliged to maintain, and therefore he desired to separate. Jacob, however, stated his reason plainly, and his brother felt the weight of it: if we must go different ways, let us cause our motive to be known, so that we may not be thought unkind. Matthew Henry says: "If friends cannot fall *in* with each other, they should see to it that they do not fall *out*." Jacob parted from his reconciled brother for the sake of his little ones, who were very dear to him.

I. LET US VIEW JACOB AS AN EXAMPLE TO US.

He displayed a tender consideration for the young and feeble; let us do the same. Let us consider:

1. *How we may overdrive?*

Puzzling them with deep and controversial points of doctrine, and condemning them because they are not quite correct in their opinions. "Them that are weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Rom. xiv. 1.

Setting up a standard of experience, and frowning at them because they have not felt all the sorrows or ecstasies which we have known.

Requiring a high degree of faith, courage, patience, and other graces which in their case can only be tender buds.

Preaching nothing but the severer truths, or constantly urging to duty by terrible threatenings while withholding the promises and the consolatory parts of the word.

Manifesting austerity of manner, suspicion, harshness, censoriousness of spirit, and contempt for weaker brethren.

Fault-finding and never commending. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Col. iii. 21.

Dwelling always upon the trials, temptations, and woes of believers, and saying little about their joys and privileges.

In these and many other ways professed teachers show that they have need to go to school to Jacob to learn the shepherd's trade, and imitate his tender thoughtfulness.

2. *Why we should not overdrive the lambs.*

Common humanity forbids.

Our own experience when we were young should teach us better.

We may again become weak, and need great forbearance.

We love them too well to be hard with them.

Jesus thinks so much of them that we cannot worry them.

The Holy Spirit dwells in them, and we must be gentle toward the faintest beginning of his work.

We should be doing Satan's work if we did overburden them.

We should thus prove ourselves to have little wisdom and less grace. If we kill the lambs now, where shall we get our sheep from next year?

We dare not bear the responsibility of offending these little ones, for terrible woes are pronounced on those who do them wrong.

We remember how tender Jesus is: and this brings us to our second point.

II. Let us view Jacob as a picture of our Lord Jesus.

See his portrait in Is. xl. 11. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

1. The weak have a special place in his love.
2. He will not have it that any of them should die.
3. Therefore he never overdrives one of them.
4. But he suits his pace to their feebleness. "I will lead on softly." Gen. xxxiii. 14. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Has he not thus been very tender to us? "Thy gentleness hath made me great." Ps. xviii. 35.

Let us not fret and worry as though he were an exactor. We are not driven by Jehu, but led by Jesus. Let us rest in his love. At the same time let us not be slower than need be.

Toward others let us be tenderness itself, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Helpful Paragraphs.

The Lord chooses under-shepherds for his flock among men subject to weakness and infirmity, that they may have a fellow-feeling for the feeble. *Selah Merrill*, in his "East of the Jordan," describes the movement of an Arab tribe, and says: "The flocks of sheep and goats were mostly driven by small children. Sometimes there were flocks of lambs and kids driven by children not much older relatively than the lambs

and kids themselves. Some of the men had in their arms two, three, four, or a whole armful of kids and lambs that were too young to walk; and among some cooking utensils there was a large saucepan, and in it was a pair of small kids that were too young for the journey."

When a candle is newly lighted and needs to be moved, it must be carried at a slow pace or it will be extinguished. A fire which is almost expiring may be revived by a gentle breath, but it will be blown out if the bellows are plied at their full force. You can drown a little plant by watering it too much, and destroy a lovely flower by exposing it to too much sun.

Nothing is so strong as gentleness: nothing so gentle as real strength.—*Francis de Sales.*

Dr. Johnson declared that want of tenderness is want of parts, and that it is a proof of stupidity as well as of depravity.

At the Stockwell Orphanage the usual rule of walking is—*little boys first.* In this way the younger children cannot be overdriven or left behind, and moreover all the boys can see before them, whereas by the usual practice of putting the tall fellows first the view in front is shut out from all but the few who lead the way. Let the church have great care for the weaker brethren, and shape her action with a constant reference to them. A strong Christian might do a thousand things lawfully if he only thought of himself, but he will not do one of them because he wishes to act expediently, and would not grieve his brother, or cause him to stumble.

Even in our manner there should be tenderness. A truly kind act may be so performed as to cause as much grief as joy. We have heard of one who would throw a penny at a beggar, and thus hurt him while relieving him. A hurt full of love has a mode of its own by which its gifts are enhanced in value. There is enough misery in the world without our carelessly

adding to it. Some persons are morbidly sensitive, and this is wrong on their part; but when we are aware of their failing we must be the more careful lest we cause them needless pain. A gouty man will cry out if we walk with heavy footstep across the room. Do we censure him for this? No, we pity him, and tread softly. Let us do the same for the sensitive.

VI.

Gen. xli. 56.—"Joseph opened all the storehouses."

The story of Joseph is full of interest; but it is chiefly useful to us as being marvellously typical of the life of our Lord Jesus.

Remark the bounty of providence in raising up Joseph to save the house of Israel, yea, and the whole world, from famishing. Then note the greatness of sovereign grace in raising up Jesus to save his people, and to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Joseph had beforehand filled the vast storehouses, and our text shows us how he used the store—"Joseph opened all the storehouses." How much more has been done by Jesus! Oh, to be partakers of his grace!

I. JOSEPH OPENED THE STOREHOUSES BY ROYAL AUTHORITY.

1. The king was only to be approached through Joseph. "Go unto Joseph" (verse 55). So with Jesus. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." John xiv. 6.
2. The king commanded that Joseph should be obeyed. "What he saith to you, do" (verse 55). "All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." John v. 23.
3. In all the land no other could open a storehouse save Joseph. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." John iii. 35.

II. JOSEPH WAS A FIT PERSON TO BE THUS AUTHORIZED TO OPEN THE STOREHOUSES.

1. He planned the storehouses, and was justly appointed to

control them. See verses 33 to 36. "Can we find such a one as this is?" (verse 38).

2. He carried out the storage, and so proved himself practical as well as inventive. "Joseph gathered corn as the sand" (verse 49).
3. He did it on a noble scale. He gathered corn "until he left numbering; for it was without number" (verse 49).
4. He had wisdom to distribute well.

The parallel is easily drawn, for our Lord Jesus is that Housekeeper, one of a thousand, who has provided for our soul's famine; "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and of his fulness have all we received." Col. i. 19; John i. 16.

III. JOSEPH ACTUALLY OPENED THE STOREHOUSES.

1. For this purpose he filled them. Grace is meant to be used.
2. To have kept them closed would have been no gain to him.
3. He opened them at a fit time. "All the land of Egypt was famished;" "the famine was over all the face of the earth" (verses 55, 56).
4. He kept them open while the famine lasted. They were never closed while a hungering applicant drew near.

The corn held out through all the famine years.

The places of storage were convenient (verse 48).

There were appointed hours for distribution.

And proper arrangements to control and regulate the crowds.

All this is far exceeded in Jesus the Antitype, in whom a fulness abides; who is ever near us; to whom we may come daily; and in whom every seeker finds a ready supply.

IV. JOSEPH OPENED THE STOREHOUSES TO ALL COMERS.

1. There was a special eye to Israel. "God sent me before

you to preserve you ;" but Joseph was also " a father unto Pharaoh," and the preserver of many nations.

2. It was a privilege to dwell near the granaries ; but it would have been a dreadful thing if any had died within sight of them. Beware of being " hearers only." Read 2 Kings vii. 19.
3. Yet many people came from far for food. " All countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn" (verse 57).
4. We read of none being sent empty away.

Yet Joseph did but sell while Jesus gives without money. Will you not come to him for heavenly bread ?

V. Joseph acquired possession of all Egypt for the king.

The Egyptians gladly yielded their money, their lands, and their persons to Pharaoh, that their lives might be preserved. Even thus we surrender ourselves, our substance, our abilities, our time, our all to the Lord. Joseph's policy seems hard, but the design of Jesus is love itself. Our full submission and consecration are the grand result of infinite love.

Windows for Light.

This is the only hope of Egypt and all lands : Joseph is exalted. Joseph is in authority. The residue of whatever supply may be available is with him. He has in his hands the keys. " All countries came into Egypt to Joseph, for to buy corn" (verse 57). A perishing world hangs on this great fact, that Joseph reigns.—*Dr. Candlish.*

Dr. Conyers was for some years a preacher before he had felt the power of the gospel. As he was reading his Greek Testament he came to Eph. iii. 8. " Unto me, who am less

than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Riches of Christ!" said he to himself—"'Unsearchable riches of Christ'! What have I preached of these? What do I know of these?" Under the blessing of the Spirit of God he was thus awakened to a new life and a new ministry. Are there not some yet living who might put to their own consciences similar questions?

William Bridge says: "There is enough in Jesus Christ to serve us all. If two, or six, or twenty men be athirst, and they go to drink out of a bottle, while one is drinking, the other envies, because he thinks there will not be enough for him too; but if a hundred be athirst, and go to the river, while one is drinking, the other envies not, because there is enough to serve them all."

All the spiritual blessings wherewith the Church is enriched are in and by Christ. The apostle instances some of the choicest: Eph. i. 3. Our election is by him (verse 4). Our adoption is by him (verse 5). Our redemption and remission of sins are both through him. All the gracious transactions between God and his people are through Christ. God loves us through Christ; he hears our prayers through Christ; he forgives us all our sins through Christ. Through Christ he justifies us; through Christ he sanctifies us; through Christ he upholds us; through Christ he perfects us. All his relations to us are through Christ; all we have is from Christ; all we expect to have hangs upon him. He is the golden hinge upon which all our salvation turns.—*Ralph Robinson.*

If any of the people of Egypt had refused to go to Joseph, they would have despised not Joseph only, but the king; and would have deserved to be denied that sustenance which he only could give them. Are not the despisers of our great Redeemer in like manner despisers of his Father who has set him as his King upon the holy hill of Zion? . . . If Joseph had thrown open his storehouses before the Egyptians felt the pressure of

hunger, they might soon have wasted the fruits of his prudent care. . . . Hunger, though very unpleasant, is often more useful than fulness of bread. They were very willing to give the price demanded for their food as long as their money lasted. What is the reason why so many are unwilling to come and receive wine and milk without money and without price? They feel no appetite for it. They are not sensible of their need of it.—*George Lawson.*

VII.

Gen. xlix. 8.—"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee."

We shall use Judah as a type of our Lord Jesus, who sprang out of Judah, who is the heir of the royal house of David, and the Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people shall be (verse 10). We use both the man Judah and the tribe of Judah in the parallel.

I. JUDAH'S PRAISE. "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise."

They who know him best, to whom he is nearest in relationship, for whom he is most concerned, praise him most.

1. *He is first in intercession.*

This is his covenant blessing. "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah." Deut. xxxii. 7.

This he proved in intercession with his father, Jacob. Gen. xliii. 3.

And in pleading with Joseph when he would have detained Benjamin. How touchingly he spake! how earnestly he offered himself as a substitute! Gen. xliv. 14.

2. *He is first in wisdom.*

To Judah belonged the man who was filled with the spirit of God, by whom the tabernacle in the wilderness was erected. "See, I have called by name

Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah : and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." Ex. xxxi. 2, 3.

To Judah came the legislative power. "Judah is my lawgiver." Ps. lx. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah" (verse 10).

3. *He takes precedence in offering.*

He that offered his offering the first day was of the tribe of Judah. See Num. vii. 12.

4. *He takes precedence in march.*

In descent or ascent, in battle or in progress, in the first place went the standard of Judah. Read Num. x. 14 ; Judges i. 2.

5. *In all things he has the pre-eminence.*

David was chosen of the Lord to be king. "He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah." Ps. lxviii. 67, 68.

II. JUDAH'S TRIUMPHS ABROAD. "Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies."

Illustrate by life of David :

He passed through severe conflicts. Read 1 Sam. xvii. 34–36.

He gained great victories. 2 Chron. xiii. 14.

He founded a peaceful empire.

He utterly crushed the forces of his foes, and broke the neck of all opposition.

So has our Lord done by his life, death, resurrection, reigning power, and second coming.

III. JUDAH'S HONORS AT HOME. "Thy father's children shall bow down before thee."

1. *He became the Head of the family.*

2. *He was clothed with lion-like power.* "He couched as a lion, and as an old lion." See verse 9. "The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed." Rev. v. 5.
3. *He is the centre of our assembling.* "To him shall the gathering of the people be" (verse 10).
4. *His glory is his meekness.* "Binding his foal," etc. (verse 11). "Thy King cometh, meek and sitting upon a colt the foal of an ass." Matt. xxi. 5.
5. *The wine bath at his first and second advent, makes him lovely in our eyes.* Note verses 11 and 12; also "I have trodden the winepress alone." Is. lxiii. 1–3.
6. *He is King to us forever. Hallelujah.* See Hosea xi. 12. "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God."

Are we among the foes against whom he fights as a lion? Let us beware how we rouse him up (verse 9).

Are we among his friends for whom he fights? Let us praise him with all our hearts, and now bow down before him. Are we not his Father's children?

Do we hunger and thirst after heavenly food? See in the 12th verse how abundant are wine and milk with him.

Suggestions.

There is abundance of suggestiveness in the text for three sermons from the one verse which we have selected as a text, and the following verses are peculiarly rich. Judah's name signifies praise; Judah in the person of David became the leader of praise. "God is praised *for* him, *in* him, and *by* him; and therefore his brethren shall praise him." See both the lion *rampant* and the lion *couchant* in our Lord Jesus, who, having spoiled principalities and powers, has gone up as a Conqueror and has couched down at the right hand of the

divine majesty. "The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed."

Rutherford often cried, "Oh, for a well-tuned harp!"

The following extract from *Thomas Brooks* may help the preacher to a measure of variety in setting forth our Lord's claim to our praise: "Christians, remember this, *all the causes of prizing persons and things are eminently and only in Christ;* therefore, set a very, very high price upon the Lord Jesus. You prize some for their beauty; why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the fairest among the children of men. Ps. xlv. 1, 2. Cant. v. 10: 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest;' or, the standard-bearer, 'among ten thousand.' You prize others for their strength. Is. xxvi. 4: 'Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' You prize others for bearing their father's image; why, the Lord Jesus is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Heb. i. 3. You prize others for their wisdom and knowledge; such a one is a very wise man, you say, and therefore you prize him; and such a one is a very knowing man, and therefore you prize him; why, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. Col. ii. 3. The truth is, all those perfections and excellencies that are in all angels and men, are all epitomized in Christ. All the angels in heaven have but some of those perfections that be in Christ. All wisdom, and all power, and all goodness, and all mercy, and all love, etc., is in no glorified creature; no, not in all glorified creatures put together. But now in Christ all these perfections and excellencies meet, as all water meets in the sea, and as all light meets in the sun. Others you prize for their usefulness; the more useful persons and things are, the more you prize and value them. The Lord Jesus Christ is of universal use to his people; why, he is the right eye of his people, without which they cannot see; and the right hand of his people, without which they cannot do, etc. He is of singular use to all his people. He is of use to weak saints, to strengthen

them ; and he is of use to doubting saints, to confirm them ; and he is of use to dull saints, to quicken them ; and he is of use to falling saints, to support them ; and he is of use to wandering saints, to recover them. In prosperity he is of use to keep his saints humble and watchful, spotless, and fruitful ; and in adversity he is of use to keep them contented and cheerful. All which should very much engage our hearts to prize this Christ."

VIII.

Ex. xii. 3, 4.—"They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb."

The lamb was to be eaten, all eaten, eaten by all, and eaten at once. The Lord Jesus is to be received into the soul as its food, and this is to be done with a whole Christ, by each one of his people, and done just now. The whole subject of the Passover is rich in instruction; we will confine ourselves to the particulars within this verse.

I. THE TEXT REMINDS US OF A PRIMARY PRIVILEGE.

1. That each man of Israel ate the passover *for himself;* "every man according to his eating." So do we feed upon Jesus, each one as his appetite, capacity, and strength enable him to do.
2. But this same delicious fare should be enjoyed by *all the family:* "a lamb for an house." Oh, that each of the parents, and all the children and servants may be partakers of Christ! By teaching, training, prayer, and holy example, this favor may be secured, for the Holy Spirit will add his blessing.

Let not these two favors be despised. Let no man be content without personal salvation, nor without the

salvation of his whole house. We have both promised in that famous text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved, *and thy house.*"

II. The text is silent as to a certain contingency.

1. The lamb was never too little for the family; and assuredly the Lord Jesus is never too little even for the largest families, nor for the most sinful persons.
2. There is no reason to stint our prayers for fear we ask too much.
3. Nor to stay our labors because the Lord Jesus cannot give us strength enough, or grace enough.
4. Nor to restrain our hopes of salvation for the whole family because of some supposed narrowness in the purpose, provision, or willingness of the Lord to bless.

"Every man according to his eating" may feast to the full upon Christ. Every believing sinner may take Christ to himself, and there is no fear that one will be refused, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

III. The text mentions a possibility, and provides for it.

There may be a want of persons to feed upon the Lamb, though there can be no lack of food for them to feed upon. The last thing that was supplied to the great marriage feast was guests. The oxen and the fatlings were killed, and all things were ready, long before "the wedding was furnished with guests."

1. One family is certainly too small a reward for Jesus—too little for the lamb.
2. One family is too little to render him all the praise, worship, service, and love which he deserves.
3. One family is too little to do all the work of proclaiming the Lamb of God, maintaining the truth, visiting the church, winning the world. Therefore let us call in the neighbor next unto our house.

Our next neighbor has the first claim upon us.

He is the most easy to reach, and by each calling his next neighbor all will be reached.

He is the most likely person to be influenced by us.

At any rate there is the rule, and we are to obey it. "Beginning at Jerusalem." Luke xxiv. 47. We read of Andrew, "he first findeth his own brother Simon." John i. 41. Those who repaired Jerusalem built every man over against his own house. Neh. iii. 28.

If our neighbor does not come when invited, we are not responsible; but if he perished because we did not invite him, blood-guiltiness would be upon us. "If thou dost not speak . . . his blood will I require at thine hand." Ezek. xxxiii. 8.

IV. THE WHOLE SUBJECT SUGGESTS THOUGHTS UPON NEIGHBORLY FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL.

1. It is good for individuals and families to grow out of selfishness, and to seek the good of a wide circle.
2. It is a blessed thing when the centre of our society is "the Lamb."
3. Innumerable blessings already flow to us from the friendships which have sprung out of our union in Jesus. Church fellowship has been fruitful in this direction.
4. Our care for one another in Christ helps to realize the unity of the one body, even as the common eating of the Passover proclaimed and assisted the solidarity of the people of Israel as one nation. This spiritual union is a high privilege.
5. Thoroughly carried out, heaven will thus be foreshadowed upon earth, for there love to Jesus and love to one another is found in every heart.

Let us be personal in our piety, and never be put off with a mere national religion or family profession.

Let us be generous in our religion, and never neglect

our families, our friends, or the neighborhood in which we dwell.

Things of Interest.

A little boy asked his mother which of the characters in "The Pilgrim's Progress" she liked best. She replied, "Christian, of course; he is the hero of the whole story." Her son said, "I don't, mother; I like Christiana best; for when Christian went on his pilgrimage he started alone, but when Christiana went she took the children with her."

"The Lord said unto Noah, Come *thou and all thy house* into the ark." True religion thinks of the house. I once knew a man who walked a long distance to hear what he called "the truth." Neither his wife nor any of his children went to any place of worship, and when he was asked about them by me, he told me that "the Lord would save his own;" to which I could not help replying that the Lord would not own *him*. For this he demanded a warrant, and I gave him this: "He that provideth not for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Does God acknowledge such persons as his elect?

A man was going to his work one morning, when he was told that the river had burst its banks, and was sweeping down the valley, carrying death and destruction wherever it went. His informant did not seem much concerned about the matter, but the brave workman immediately rushed off down to the lower part of the valley, shouting, "If that's so, somebody has got to let the people know." By his timely warning he saved the lives of many people.

Eating together is one of the most effectual symbols of fellowship; hence the Passover and the Lord's Supper remind us of our oneness in Christ. Never let us eat our morsel alone. When we eat the fat and drink the sweet, let us joyfully send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared.

IX.

Ex. xiv. 15.—"Wherefore criest thou unto me?"

There may come a time when this question needs to be asked even of a Moses. There is a period when crying should give place to action; when prayer is heard and the Red Sea is dividing, it would be shameful disobedience to remain trembling and praying. Therefore Moses must lift his rod and speak to the children of Israel that they go forward. Every fruit of the Spirit comes in its season, and is then most precious; out of season even prayer comes not to perfection. Ask, by all means; but prepare yourself to receive. Seek earnestly; but do not hold back when the hour arrives for you to find. Knock, and knock again; but hasten to enter as soon as the door is open.

When we ought to believe that we have the mercy, why do we continue to cry for it as though we had not obtained it? When increased faith is all that is wanted, why are we seeking the blessing which God places within reach of our faith? When duty is quite clear, why hesitate to perform it and make prayer an excuse for our delay?

The question should be asked of all who pray: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?"

I. SOMETIMES THE ANSWER WILL BE VERY UNSATISFACTORY.

1. Because I was brought up to do so. Some have perpetrated gross hypocrisy through repeating forms of prayer which they learned in childhood. We have heard of one who prayed for his father and mother in his old age. John iv. 24.

2. It is a part of my religion. These pray as a Dervish dances or a Fakir holds his arm aloft; but they know nothing of the spiritual reality of prayer. Matt. vi. 7.
3. It is a right thing to do. So indeed it is if we pray aright; but the mere repetition of pious words is vanity. Is. xxix. 13.
4. I feel easier in my mind after it. Ought you to feel easier? May not your formal prayers be a mockery of God, and so an increase of sin? Is. i. 12–15; Ezek. xx. 31.
5. I think it meretorious and saving. This is sheer falsehood, and a high offence against the merit and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

II. SOMETIMES THE ANSWER WILL BETRAY IGNORANCE.

1. When it hinders immediate repentance. Instead of quitting sin and mourning over it, some men talk of praying. "To obey is better than sacrifice," and better than supplication.
2. When it keeps from faith in Jesus. The gospel is not "pray and be saved;" but "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Matt. vii. 21; John vi. 47.
3. When we suppose that it fits us for Jesus. We must come to him as sinners, and not set up our prayers as a sort of righteousness. Luke xviii. 11, 12.
4. When we think that prayer alone will bring a blessing.

III. SOMETIMES THE ANSWER WILL BE QUITE CORRECT.

1. Because I must. I am in trouble, and must pray or perish. Sighs and cries are not made to order, they are the irresistible outbursts of the heart. Ps. xlii. 1; Rom. viii. 26.
2. Because I know I shall be heard, and therefore I feel a strong desire to deal with God in supplication. "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him." Ps. cxvi. 2.

3. Because I delight in it; it brings rest to my mind, and hope to my heart. It is a sweet means of communion with my God. "It is good for me to draw near to God." Ps. lxxiii. 28.
4. Because I feel that I can best express the little faith and repentance I have by crying to the Lord for more.
5. Because these grow as I pray. No doubt we may pray ourselves into a good frame if God the Holy Ghost blesses us.
6. Because I look for all from God, and therefore I cry to him. Ps. lxii. 5. He will be inquired of by us. Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

Where must those be who depend upon their own prayers?

What are those who live without prayer?

What are those who can give no reason for praying, but superstitiously repeat words without heart?

Cases in Point, etc.

An anxious inquirer to whom I had plainly put the great gospel command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus," constantly baffled my attempts to lead her out of self to Christ. At last she cried out, "Pray for me! pray for me!" She seemed greatly shocked when I replied, "I will do nothing of the kind. I have prayed for you before; but if you refuse to believe the word of the Lord, I do not see what I can pray for. The Lord bids you believe his Son, and if you will not do so, but persist in making God a liar, you will perish, and you richly deserve it." This brought her to her bearings. She begged me again to tell her the way of salvation; she quietly received it as a little child, her frame quivered, her face brightened, and she cried, "Sir, I can believe, I do believe, and I am saved. Thank you for refusing to comfort me in my unbelief." Then she said very softly, "Will you not pray for

me now?" Assuredly I did, and we rejoiced together that we could offer the prayer of faith.

A good illustration of the need of following up prayer by effort may be found in the following anecdote:

A scholar was remarkable for repeating her lessons well. Her school-fellow, rather idly inclined, said to her one day, "How is it that you always say your lessons so perfectly?" She replied, "I always pray that I may say my lessons well." "Do you?" said the other; "well, then, I will pray, too;" but alas! the next morning she could not even repeat a word of her usual task. Very much confounded, she ran to her friend, and reproached her as deceitful. "I prayed," said she, "but I could not say a single word of my lesson." "Perhaps," rejoined the other, "you took no pains to learn it." "Learn it! Learn it! I did not learn it at all," answered the first; "I thought I had no occasion to learn it when I prayed that I might say it." The mistake is a very common one.

In a great thaw on one of the American rivers, there was a man on one of the cakes of ice, which was not yet actually separated from the unbroken mass. In his terror, however, he did not see this, but knelt down and began to pray aloud for God to deliver him. The spectators on the shore cried loudly to him: "Man, man, stop praying, and run for the shore." So I would say to some of you, "Rest not in praying, but believe in Jesus."—*Quoted in the "Christian,"* 1874.

On one occasion, when Bunyan was endeavoring to pray, the tempter suggested "that neither the mercy of God, not yet the blood of Christ, at all concerned him, nor could they help him by reason of his sin; therefore it was vain to pray." Yet he thought with himself, "I will pray." "But," said the tempter, "your sin is unpardonable." "Well," said he, "I will pray." "It is to no boot," said the adversary. And still he answered, "I will pray." And so he began his prayer: "Lord, Satan tells me that neither thy mercy nor

Christ's blood is sufficient to save my soul. Lord, shall I honor thee most by believing thou wilt and canst? or him, by believing thou neither wilt nor canst? Lord, I would fain honor thee by believing that thou canst and wilt." And while he was thus speaking, "as if some one had clapped him on the back," that Scripture fastened on his mind, "Oh, man, great is thy faith."

"Seek thou thy God alone by prayer,
And thou shalt doubt—perchance despair;
But seek him also by endeavor,
And thou shalt find him gracious ever."

X.

Ex. xxxii. 26.—"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."

Israel had rebelled against Jehovah, and had set up the golden calf. Moses appeared among them, and in great wrath threw down their idol and rebuked Aaron. The people were awestruck by the presence of the servant of the Lord, and sought their tents, save only a number of the more hardened who brazened it out. Moses, feeling that this great rebellion must be crushed and punished, summoned the faithful to his standard, and those who came were of the tribe of Levi. These, with stern fidelity, fulfilled their mission, and hence were made teachers of Israel forever. Decision is that which the Lord looks for in his ministers, and when he sees it he will reward it. Remember the blessing of Levi, in Deut. xxxiii. "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummin and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar."

All true men ought to be decided, for a dreadful conflict is going on at this present day, and a curse will fall on neutrals.

I. THE CONFLICT, AND WHICH IS THE LORD'S SIDE.

Belief in God against atheism and other forms of unbelief.

Scripture in opposition to false philosophy and "modern thought."

The gospel *versus* superstition.

Christ *versus* self-righteousness.

The commands of God *versus* self-pleasing.

Holiness and right, against sin and oppression.

II. THE LORD'S FRIENDS AND WHAT THEY MUST DO.

They must own their allegiance openly. "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord" (verse 29).

They should come out and rally to the standard: "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." We do this by open union with the church, by boldly rebuking sin, by testifying for truth, by not conforming to the world, and by conforming to Christ our Lord. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

They must be willing to be in a minority: one tribe against eleven, if need be.

They must become aggressive. "Put every man his sword by his side" (verse 27).

Their zeal must overmaster nature's ties. "Neither did he acknowledge his brethren," etc. Deut. xxxiii. 9.

They must do what they are bidden. "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses." Ex. xxxii. 28.

III. THE LORD'S HOST AND ITS ENCOURAGEMENTS.

Their cause is that of right and truth. A good cause is a firm foundation and a powerful stimulus of valor.

It is the cause of the Almighty God. "They have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." Deut. xxxiii. 9.

Christ himself is our Captain. Who can hesitate with such a Chieftain? "A leader and commander for the people." Is. lv. 4.

The angels are with us. Horses of fire and chariots of fire are round about the Lord's servants. 2 Kings vi. 17.

Thousands of the best of men have been on this side. Heb. xii. 1. .

It is the side of conscience, and of a clean heart.

It is that side of the warfare which ends in heaven and victory, world without end. Rev. xix. 14.

IV. THE QUESTION OF THE TEXT, AND PROPOSALS FOR ENLISTMENT.

Take the shilling—by faith receive the promise.

Put on the colors—by confessing Christ openly in baptism.

Submit to drill—be willing to learn, and yield to discipline.

Put on the regimentals—wear the garments of holiness, the livery of love, the whole armor of God. Eph. vi. 13–18.

Gird on your sword—"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Enter on civil war first. Wage war within your own soul. Slay sin, conquer self, cast down high looks, etc.

March to the field. Fight with falsehood, superstition, cruelty, oppression, drunkenness, uncleanness, and sin of every sort, anywhere and everywhere.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS.

"We trust the Lord is on our side, Mr. Lincoln," said the speaker of a delegation of Christian people to that good man, during one of the darkest days of the American Civil War.

"I do not regard that as so essential as something else," replied Mr. Lincoln. The worthy visitors looked horror-struck, until the President added: "I am most concerned to know that we are on the Lord's side."

Mr. Lincoln was right. The right side is not my side or your side. The Lord's side is the place to which every one of us should rally. His banner has right, truth, love, and holiness written on it. Be sure you stand up for God's banner, even if you stand alone.

Guizot, in his life of St. Louis of France, says that the latter had many vassals who were also vassals of the King of England, and that many subtle and difficult questions arose as to the extent of the service which they owed to these kings. At length the French king commanded all those nobles who held lands in English territory to appear before him, and then he said to them: "As it is impossible for any man living in my kingdom and having possessions in England rightly to serve two masters, you must either attach yourselves altogether to me, or inseparably to the King of England." After saying this, he gave them a certain day by which to make their choice.

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar:
Who follows in his train?" etc.

"Set down my name, sir." According to Bunyan, these were the words of the man who fought his way into the palace, and who was welcomed with the song:

"Come in, come in,
Eternal glory thou shalt win."

A dear friend of mine, the head of a family of grown-up sons and daughters, lately passed away very suddenly. The day before he died all the members of the household were with him, including one who had recently, like the rest, experienced the power of saving grace. The father's joy was great.

as he put his hand upon one after another of his offspring, saying with an overflowing heart, "And *this one* on the Lord's side! and *this one* on the Lord's side!" How would it be with our hearer should he have to stand at the death-bed of a godly parent? Would that parent rejoice over him because he is on the Lord's side?

XI.

Lev. iv. 29.—"He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering."

Here we have an emblem of the way in which a sacrifice becomes available for the offerer. The same ceremony is commanded in chapter iv. 4, 15, 24, 33, and in other places: it is therefore important and instructive.

The question with many souls is how to obtain an interest in Christ so as to be saved by him. Never could a weightier question be asked.

It is certain that this is absolutely needful; but alas, it has been fearfully neglected by many. In vain did Christ die if he is not believed in.

It ought to be attended to at once.

The text gives us a pictorial answer to tne question: How can Christ's sacrifice become available for me?

Let us learn:

I. The intent of the symbol.

1. *It was a confession of sin:* else no need of a sin offering.
   To this was added a confession of the desert of punishment, or why should the victim be slain?
   There was also an abandonment of all other methods of removing sin. The hands were empty, and laid alone upon the sin offering.
   Do this at the cross; for there alone is sin put away.
2. *It was a consent to the plan of substitution.*
   Some raise questions as to the justice and certainty of this method of salvation; but he who is to be saved

does not so, for he sees that God himself is the best judge of its rightness, and if *he* is content *we* may assuredly be so.

Substitution exceedingly honors the law, and vindicates justice.

There is no other plan which meets the case, or even fairly looks at it. Man's sense of guilt is not met by other proposals.

But this brings rest to the most tender conscience.

> "What if we trace the globe around,
> And search from Britain to Japan,
> There shall be no religion found
> So just to God, so safe to man."

3. *It was an acceptance of the victim.*

Jesus is the most natural substitute, for he is the second Adam, the second head of the race; the true ideal man.

He is the only person able to offer satisfaction, having a perfect humanity united with his Godhead.

He alone is acceptable to God; he may well be acceptable to us.

4. *It was a believing transference of sin.*

By laying on of hands sin was typically laid on the victim.

It was laid there so as to be no longer on the offerer.

5. *It was a dependence—leaning on the victim.*

Is there not a most sure stay in Jesus for the leaning heart?

Consider the nature of the suffering and death by which the atonement was made, and you will rest in it.

Consider the dignity and worth of the sacrifice by whom the death was endured. The glory of Christ's person enhances the value of his atonement. Heb. x. 5–10.

Remember that none of the saints now in heaven have had any other atoning sacrifice. "Jesus only" has

been the motto of all justified ones. "He offered one sacrifice for sins forever." Heb. x. 12.

Those of us who are saved are resting there alone; why should not *you*, and every anxious one?

II. The simplicity of the symbol.

1. There were no antecedent rites. The victim was there, and hands were laid on it: nothing more. We add neither preface nor appendix to Christ; he is Alpha and Omega.
2. The offerer came in all his sin. "Just as I am." It was to have his sin removed that the offerer brought the sacrifice; not because he had himself removed it.
3. There was nothing in his hand of merit, or price.
4. There was nothing on his hand. No gold ring to indicate wealth; no signet of power; no jewel of rank. The offerer came as a man, and not as learned, rich, or honorable.
5. He performed no cunning legerdemain with his hand. By leaning upon it he took the victim to be his representative; but he placed no reliance upon ceremonial performances.
6. Nothing was done to his hand. His ground of trust was the sacrifice, not his hands. He desired his hand to be clean, but upon that fact he did not rest for pardon.

Come then, dear hearer, whether saint or sinner, and lean hard upon Jesus. He taketh away the sin of the world. Trust him with your sin, and it is forever put away. Put forth now your hand, and adopt the expiation of the redeeming Lord as your expiation.

Anecdotes and Illustrations.

A poor blind woman in Liverpool, after her conversion, committed many hymns to memory. She was an occasional attendant upon the old Earl of Derby, the grandfather of the

present earl. She repeated one of her hymns to him. The old earl liked it, and encouraged her to repeat more. But one day, when repeating the hymn of Charles Wesley, "All ye that pass by," she came to the words:

> "The Lord in the day of his anger did lay
> Your sins on the Lamb, and he bore them away."

He said: "Stop, Mrs. Brass, don't you think it should be

> 'The Lord in the day of his *mercy* did lay'?"

She did not think his criticism valid; but it proved that she was not repeating her verses to inattentive ears, and other indications showed that the blind woman was made a blessing to the dying nobleman.—*Paxton Hood's "Life of Isaac Watts."*

When Christmas Evans was about to die, several ministers were standing round his bed. He said to them: "Preach Christ to the people, brethren. Look at me; in myself I am nothing but ruin. But look at me in Christ; I am heaven and salvation."

It is not the quantity of thy faith that shall save thee. A drop of water is as true water as the whole ocean. So a little faith is as true faith as the greatest. A child eight days old is as really a man as one of sixty years; a spark of fire is as true fire as a great flame; a sickly man is as truly living as a healthy man. So it is not the measure of thy faith that saves thee—*it is the blood that it grips to that saves thee.* As the weak hand of a child, that leads the spoon to the mouth, will feed it as well as the strong arm of a man; for it is not the hand that feeds thee—albeit, it puts the meat into thy mouth, but it is the meat carried into thy stomach that feeds thee. So if thou canst grip Christ ever so weakly, he will not let thee perish. . . . The weakest hands can take a gift as well as the strongest. Now, Christ is this gift, and weak faith may grip him as well as strong faith, and Christ is as truly thine when thou hast weak faith, as when thou hast come to those triumphant joys through the strength of faith.—*Welsh.*

The Puritans speak of faith as a recumbency, a leaning. It needs no power to lean; it is a cessation from our own strength, and allowing our weakness to depend upon another's power. Let no man say: "I cannot lean;" it is not a question of what you can do, but a confession of what you cannot do, and a leaving of the whole matter with Jesus. No woman could say, "I cannot swoon;" it is not a matter of power. Die into the life of Christ; let him be all in all while you are nothing at all.

XII.

Num. xi. 1.—"And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp."

Rehearse the historical fact. Observe how the mischief began in the outskirts among the mixed multitude, and how the fire of the Lord burned in the uttermost parts of the camp. The great danger of the Church lies in her camp-followers or hangers-on; they infect the true Israel. Hence the need of guarding the entrance of the Church, and keeping up discipline within it. Grumbling, discontent, ungrateful complaining—these are grievous offences against our gracious God.

We shall consider the subject in a series of observations.

I. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT CAUSES DISPLEASURE TO THE LORD.

1. This we might infer from our own feelings, when dependents, children, servants, or receivers of alms are always grumbling. We grow weary of them, and angry with them.
2. In the case of men toward God it is much worse for them to murmur, since they deserve no good at his hands, but the very reverse. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Lam. iii. 39; Ps. ciii. 10.
3. In that case also it is a reflection upon the Lord's goodness, wisdom, truth, and power. See the complaint in verses 4, 5, 6.

4. The evil lusting which attends the complaining proves its injurious character. We are ready for anything when we quarrel with God. 1 Cor. x. 5–12.
5. God thinks so ill of it that his wrath burns, and chastisement is not long withheld. See verse 33 of this chapter, and other parts of Scripture.

II. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT FANCIES IT WOULD FIND PLEASURE IN THINGS DENIED IT.

Israel had manna, but sighed for fish, cucumbers, melons, onions, etc.

But to set an imaginary value upon that which we have not:

1. Is foolish, childish, pettish.
2. Is injurious to ourselves, for it prevents our enjoying what we already have. It leads men to slander angels' food and call it "this light bread." It led Haman to think nothing of his prosperity because a single person refused him reverence. Esther v. 13.
3. Is slanderous toward God, and ungrateful to him.
4. Leads to rebellion, falsehood, envy, and all manner of sins.

III. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT FINDS NO PLEASURE FOR ITSELF EVEN WHEN ITS WISH IS FULFILLED.

The Israelites had flesh in superabundance in answer to their foolish prayers, but:

1. It was attended with leanness of soul. Ps. cvi. 15.
2. It brought satiety. "Until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you" (verse 20).
3. It caused death. He "slew the fattest of them." Ps. lxxviii. 31.
4. It thus led to mourning on all sides. Kibroth Hattaavah, or, "the graves of lust," was the name of this station (verse 34).

IV. A DISSATISFIED SPIRIT SHOWS THAT THE MIND NEEDS REGULATING.

Grace would put our desires in order, and keep our thoughts and affections in their proper places, thus:

1. Content with such things as we have. Heb. xiii. 5.
2. Toward other things moderate in desire. "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Prov. xxx. 8.
3. Concerning earthly things which may be lacking, fully resigned. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matt. xxvi. 39.
4. First, and most eagerly, desiring God. "My soul thirsteth for God," etc. Ps. xlii. 2.
5. Next, coveting earnestly the best gifts. 1 Cor. xii. 31.
6. Following ever in love the more excellent way. 1 Cor. xii. 31.

HELPFUL NOTES.

I have read of Cæsar, that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it fell out that the day appointed was so extremely foul that nothing could be done to the honor of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged, that he commanded all them that had bows to shoot up their arrows at Jupiter, their chief god, as in defiance of him for that rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were very sorely wounded. So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are so many arrows shot at God himself, will return upon our own pates, or hearts; they reach not him, but they will hit us; they hurt not him, but they will wound us; therefore, it is better to be mute than to murmur; it is dangerous to contend with one who is a consuming fire. Heb. xii. 29.—*Thomas Brooks.*

God hath much ado with us. Either we lack health, or quietness, or children, or wealth, or company, or ourselves in

all these. It is a wonder the Israelites found not fault with the want of sauce to their quails, or with their old clothes, or their solitary way. Nature is moderate in her desires; but conceit is insatiable.—*Bishop Hall.*

Murmuring is a quarrelling with God, and inveighing against him. "They spake against God." Num. xxi. 5. The murmurer saith interpretatively that God hath not dealt well with him, and that he hath deserved better from him. The murmurer chargeth God with folly. This is the language, or rather blasphemy, of a murmuring spirit—God might have been a wiser and a better God. The murmurer is a mutineer. The Israelites are called in the same text "murmurers" and "rebels" (Num. xvii. 10); and is not rebellion as the sin of witchcraft? 1 Sam. xv. 23. Thou that art a murmurer art in the account of God as a witch, a sorcerer, as one that deals with the devil. This is a sin of the first magnitude. Murmuring often ends in cursing; Micah's mother fell to cursing when the talents of silver were taken away. Judges xvii. 2. So doth the murmurer when a part of his estate is taken away. Our murmuring is the devil's music; this is that sin which God cannot bear: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?" Num. xiv. 27. It is a sin which whets the sword against a people; it is a land-destroying sin: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." 1 Cor. x. 10.—*T. Watson.*

Losing our temper with God is a more common thing in the spiritual life than many suppose.—*F. W. Faber.*

Life is a field of nettles to some men. Their fretful, worrying tempers are always pricking out through the tender skin of their uneasiness. Why, if they were set down in Paradise, carrying their bad mind with them, they would fret at the good angels, and the climate, and the colors even of the roses.—*Dr. Bushnell.*

I dare no more fret than curse or swear.—*John Wesley.*

A child was crying in passion, and I heard its mother say: "If you cry for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for." From the sound of her hand, I gathered the moral that those who cry about nothing are making a rod for their own backs, and will probably be made to smart under it.

XIII.

Deut. xxxii. 36.—"For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left."

To ungodly men the time of their fall is fatal; there is no rising again for them. They mount higher and higher upon the ladder of riches; but at last they can climb no higher, their feet slide, and all is over. This calamity hasteneth on. "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste" (verse 35).

But it is not so with three characters of whom we will now speak; they are judged in this world that they may not be condemned hereafter (1 Cor. xi. 32). Of each of them it may be said: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down." Ps. xxxvii. 24.

I. The Lord's own church.

1. A church may be sorely tried—"power gone, none left."

By persecution the faithful may be cut off. Ps. cvii. 39.

By removals, death, poverty, a church may be depleted to a painful extent. Is. i. 8, 9.

Through the lack of a faithful ministry, there may be no increase; and those who remain may grow feeble and dispirited.

By general falling off of hearers, members, etc., a church may be sorely distressed. Various circumstances may scatter a people, such as internal dissen-

sion, pestilent heresy, and lack of spiritual life. Where there is no spiritual food hungry souls find no home. Job xv. 23.

2. But it may then cry to God.
   If indeed *his people*, the covenant stands, and he will judge them.
   If still *his servants*, the bond holds on his side, and he will repent himself for them.
   His eye is ever upon *them*, and their eye should be up to *him*.
3. He will return and revive his own church. He who killed will make alive (verse 39). He pities his children when he sees them broken down under their sorrows.
4. Meanwhile the trial is permitted:
   To find out his servants and drive out hypocrites. Is. xxxiii. 14.
   To test the faith of sincere saints, and to strengthen it.
   To manifest his own grace by supporting them under the trying times, and by visiting them with future blessing.
   To secure to himself the glory when the happier days are granted.

II. THE TRIED BELIEVER.

1. His power may be gone. Personally he becomes helpless. Bodily health fails, prudence is baffled, skill is taken away, courage sinks, even spiritual force departs. Lam. iii. 17, 18.
2. His earthly help may fail. "There is none shut up or left." A man without a friend moves the compassion of God.
3. He may be assailed by doubts and fears, and hardly know what to do with himself. Job iii. 23–26. In all this there may be chastisement for sin. It is so described in the context.

4. His hope lies in the compassion of God; he has no pleasure in putting his people to grief. "He will turn again, he will have compassion." Micah vii. 19.

Such sharp trials may be sent because:

Nothing less would cure the evil hidden within. Is. xxvii. 9.

Nothing less might suffice to bring the whole heart to God alone.

Nothing less might affect the believer's future life. Is. xxxviii. 16.

Nothing less might complete his experience, enlarge his acquaintance with the Word, and perfect his testimony for God.

III. THE CONVINCED SINNER.

He is cleaned out of all that wherein he prided himself.

1. His self-righteousness is gone. He has no boasting of the past, or self-trust for the future. Job ix. 30, 31.
2. His ability to perform acceptable works is gone. "Their power is gone." "Dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1.
3. His secret hopes which were shut up are now all dead and buried.
4. His proud romantic dreams are gone. Is. xxix. 8.
5. His worldly delights, his bold defiance, his unbelief, his big talk, his carelessness, his vain confidence, are all gone.
6. Nothing is left but the pity of God. Ps. ciii. 13.

When the tide has ebbed out to the very uttermost, it turns.

The prodigal has spent all before he returned.

Empty-handed sinners are welcome to the fulness of Christ.

Since the Lord repents of the sorrows of the despondings, they may well take heed and repent of their sins.

Notes in Aid.

The church in New Park Street was sadly reduced in numbers, and from the position of its meeting-house there seemed no prospect before it but ultimate dissolution ; but there were a few in its midst who never ceased to pray for a gracious revival. The congregation became smaller and smaller, but they hoped on, hoped ever. Let it never be forgotten that when they were at their worst the Lord remembered them, and gave to them such a tide of prosperity that they have had no mourning, or doubting, but more than thirty years of continued rejoicing.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity.
Extremities are a warrant for importunities.
A man at his wit's end is not at his faith's end.

Matthew Henry.

Grandly did the old Scottish believer, of whom Dr. Brown tells us in his *Horæ Subsecivæ*, respond to the challenge of her pastor, regarding the ground of her faith. "Janet," said the minister, "what would you say if, after all he has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?" "E'en's (even as) he likes," answered Janet ; "if he does, he'll lose mair than I'll do"—meaning that he would lose his honor for truth and goodness. Therefore, the Lord cannot leave his people in the hour of their need.

"Every praying Christian will find that there is no Gethsemane without its angel."

He brings his people into a wilderness, but it is that he may speak comfortably to them ; he casts them into a fiery furnace, but it is that they may have more of his company.—*T. Brooks.*

A person who could not swim had fallen into the water. A man who could swim sprang in to save him. Instead, however, of at once taking hold of the struggling man, he kept at some distance from him until he had ceased struggling ; he then laid hold of him, and pulled him ashore. Upon the peo-

ple on the pier asking him why he did not at once take hold of the drowning person, he replied, "I could not attempt to save a man so long as he could try to save himself." The Lord acts thus toward sinners; they must cease from themselves, and then he will display the power of his grace upon them.

So long as a sinner has a mouldy crust of his own he will not feed upon heavenly manna. They say that half a loaf is better than no bread, but this is not true; for on half a loaf men lead a starvation existence; but when they have no bread they fly to Jesus for the food which came down from heaven. As long as a soul has a farthing to bless itself with, it will foolishly refuse the free forgiveness of its debts; but absolute penury drives it to the true riches.

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own
We get no full discharge."

XIV.

Joshua xxiv. 19.—"And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord."

In answer to Joshua's challenge, the people had said, "We will serve the Lord, for he is our God." But Joshua knew them too well to trust them, and reminded them that they were undertaking what they could not perform. They did not believe him, but cried, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord;" but their after history proved the truth of Joshua's warning. God's word knows us better than we know ourselves. God's omniscience sees each part of our being as an anatomist sees the various portions of the body, and he therefore knows our moral and spiritual nature most thoroughly. A watchmaker is the best judge of a watch; and he who made man has the best knowledge of his condition and capacity. Let us dwell upon his verdict as to human ability.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE TRUTH THAT UNRENEWED MEN CANNOT SERVE GOD.

It is not a physical but a moral inability, and this is not in their nature, but in their fallen nature; not of God, but of sin. It may be said that they could serve God if they liked; but in that "if" lies the hinge of the whole question. Man's inability lies in the want of moral power so to wish and will as actually to perform. This leaves him with undiminished responsibility; for he ought to be able to serve God, and his inability is his fault. Jer. xiii. 23.

1. The nature of God renders perfect service impossible to

depraved men. "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God, he is a jealous God." See context.

2. The best they could render as unrenewed men would lack heart and intent, and therefore must be unacceptable. Without love and faith men cannot please God. What are the prayers, alms, and worshippings of a Christless soul? Is. i. 15.
3. The law of God is perfect, comprehensive, spiritual, far-reaching; who can hope to fulfil it? If a look may commit adultery, who shall in all points keep the law? Matt. v. 28.
4. The carnal mind is inclined to self-will, self-seeking, lust, enmity, pride, and all other evils. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7.
5. Let men try to be perfectly obedient. They will not try it. They argue for their ability, but they are loath enough to exert it.

II. THE DISCOURAGEMENT WHICH ARISES FROM THIS TRUTH.

It is alleged that this will drive men to despair, and our reply is that the kind of despair to which it drives men is most desirable and salutary.

1. It discourages men from an impossible task.

   They might as well hope to invent perpetual motion as to present a perfect obedience of their own, having already sinned. If a man should try to hold up a ladder with his own hand, and at the same time climb to the top of it, he would have less difficulty than in causing his evil nature to attain to holiness.
2. It discourages from a ruinous course.

   Self-righteousness is a deadly thing; it is a proud refusal of mercy, and a rebellion against grace. Self-confidence of any sort is the enemy of the Saviour.
3. It discourages reliance upon ceremonies or any other out-

ward religiousness, by assuring men that these cannot suffice.

4. It discourages from every other way of self-salvation, and thus shuts men up to faith in the Lord Jesus. Nothing better can befall them. Gal. ii. 22, 23.

III. THE NECESSITIES OF WHICH WE ARE REMINDED BY THIS TRUTH.

Unregenerate men, before you can serve God you need :

A new nature, which only the Spirit of God can create in you ; the old man cannot serve the Lord. An impure fountain must pour out foul streams. The tree must be made good, or the fruit will not be good.

Reconciliation. How shall an enemy serve his king? There must be forgiveness, friendship, mutual delight. God and you must be made friends through the Mediator, or else you cannot be the servant of God.

Acceptance. Till you are accepted, your service cannot please God. Only a perfect righteousness can make you accepted of a holy and jealous God ; and none but Jesus can give you a complete justification.

Continued aid. This you must have to keep you in the way when once you are in it. 1 Sam. ii. 9 ; Jude xxiv. 25.

If you cannot serve God as you are, yet trust him as he manifests himself in Christ Jesus ; and do this just as you are.

This will enable you to serve him on better principles.

This change of your nature will be effected by the Holy Spirit, who will come and dwell in you.

This will fit you for heaven, where "his servants shall serve him."

STRIKING PIECES.

No wasp will make honey ; before it will do that it must be transformed into a bee. A sow will not sit up to wash its face like the cat before the fire ; neither will a debauched person take delight in holiness. No devil could praise the Lord as angels do, and no unregenerate man can offer acceptable service as the saints do.

Their inability was wholly of the moral kind. They could not do it because they were not disposed to do it, just as it is said of Joseph's brethren (Gen. xxxvii. 4) that they "could not speak peaceably unto him," so strong was their personal dislike to him. . . . But an inability arising from this source was obviously inexcusable, on the same grounds that a drunkard's inability to master his propensity for strong drink is inexcusable. In like manner, the "cannot" of the impenitent sinner, in regard to the performance of his duty, is equally inexcusable.—*George Bush, in "Notes on Joshua."*

The existence of sin within us entails on us certain consequences which we have no more power to evade than the idiot has power to change his look of idiocy ; or the palsied hand has power to free itself from its torpor.—*B. W. Newton.*

"A little girl when reproved by her mother for some fault, and told that she should teach her little brothers to do right, replied, 'How can I do right when there is no right in me?' Did not Paul make the same confession?" Rom. vii. 18.

"Man cannot be saved by perfect obedience, for he cannot render it ; he cannot be saved by imperfect obedience, for God will not accept it."

A man deeply exercised about his soul was conversing with a friend on the subject, when the friend said, "Come at once to Jesus, for he will take away all your sins from your back." "Yes, I am aware of that," said the other ; "but what about my back?" I find I have not only sins to take away, but there is myself ; what is to be done with that? And there is

not only my back, but hands and feet, and head and heart are such a mass of iniquity that it's myself I want to get rid of before I can get peace.—*British Evangelist.*

It is possible I may do an occasional service for one whose servant I am not, but it were mean that a great person should be served only by the servants of another lord.—*John Howe.*

"Run, run, and work, the law commands,
But gives me neither feet nor hands;
But sweeter sounds the gospel brings,
It bids me fly, and gives me wings."

XV.

Judges ix. 9.—"But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

The fable teaches that temptations will come to us all, however sweet, or useful, or fruitful, even as they came to the fig, the olive, and the vine. These temptations may take the shape of proffered honors; if not a crown, yet some form of preferment or power may be the bribe.

The trees were under God's government and wanted no king; but in this fable they "went forth," and so quitted their true place. Then they sought to be like men, forgetting that God had not make them to be conformed to a fallen race. Revolting themselves, they strove to win over those better trees which had remained faithful.

No wonder they chose the olive, so rich and honored; for it would give their kingdom respectability to have such a monarch; but the olive wisely declined, and gave its reason.

I. Apparent promotions are not to be snatched at.

The question is to be asked, *Should* I? Let us never do what would be unbecoming, unsuitable, unwise. Gen. xxxix. 9.

Emphasis is to be laid on the *I*. Should *I*? If God has given me peculiar gifts or special grace, does it become *me* to trifle with these endowments? Should I give them up to gain honor for myself? Neh. vi. 11.

A higher position may seem desirable, but would it be right to gain it by such cost? Jer. xlv. 5.

It will involve duties and cares. "Go up and down among the trees" implies that there would be care, oversight, travelling, etc.

These duties will be quite new to me; for, like an olive, I have been hitherto planted in one place. Should I run into new temptations, new difficulties, etc., of my own wanton will?

Can I expect God's blessing upon such strange work? Put the question in the case of wealth, honor, power, which are set before us. Should we grasp at them at the risk of being less at peace, less holy, less prayerful, less useful?

II. ACTUAL ADVANTAGES ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH.

"Should I leave my fatness?" I have this great boon, should I lightly lose it?

It is the greatest advantage in life to be useful both to God and man. "By me they honor God and man." We ought heartily to prize this high privilege.

To leave this for anything which the world can offer would be great loss. "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon?" etc. Jer. xviii. 14, ii. 13.

Our possession of fatness meets the temptation to become a king. We are happy enough in Christ, in his service, with his people, and in the prospect of the reward. We cannot better ourselves by the move; let us stay as we are.

We may also meet it by the reflection:

That the prospect is startling. "Shall I leave my fatness?" For an olive to do this would be unnatural: for a believer to leave holy living would be worse. John vi. 68.

That the retrospect would be terrible—"leave my fat-

ness." What must it be to have left grace, and truth, and holiness, and Christ? Remember Judas.

That even an hour of such leaving would be a loss. What would an olive do even for a day if it left its fatness?

That it would all end in disappointment; for nothing could compensate for leaving the Lord. All else is death. Jer. xvii. 13.

That to abide firmly and reject all baits is like the saints, the martyrs, and their Lord; but to prefer honor to grace is a mere bramble folly.

III. TEMPTATION SHOULD BE TURNED TO ACCOUNT.

Let us take deeper root. The mere proposal to leave our fatness should make us hold the faster to it.

Let us be on the watch that we lose not our joy, which is our fatness. If we would not leave *it*, neither can we bear that it should leave *us*.

Let us yield more fatness, and bear more fruit: he who gains largely is all the further removed from loss. The more we increase in grace the less are we likely to leave it.

Let us feel the more content, and speak the more lovingly of our gracious state, that none may dare to entice us. When Satan sees us happily established he will have the less hope of overthrowing us.

MEMORANDA.

Many to obtain a higher wage have left holy companionships and sacred opportunities for hearing the word and growing in grace. They have lost their Sabbaths, quitted a soul-feeding ministry, and fallen among worldlings, to their own sorrowful loss. Such persons are as foolish as the poor Indians who gave the Spaniards gold in exchange for paltry beads. Riches procured by impoverishing the soul are always a curse. To increase your business so that you cannot attend week-night

services is to become really poorer; to give up heavenly pleasure and receive earthly cares in exchange is a sorry sort of barter.

Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of England in the time of James I., was a man of noble spirit, and often incurred the displeasure of the king by his patriotism. On one occasion, when an unworthy attempt was made to influence his conduct, he replied, "When the case happens I shall do that which shall be fit for a judge to do." Oh, that all Christians in trying moments would act as shall be fit for followers of Christ to do!

In Tennyson's story of the village maiden, who became the wife of the Lord of Burleigh, we see how burdensome worldly honors may prove, even when, though unsought, they have been honorably gained.

"But a trouble weighed upon her,
And perplexed her, night and morn,
With the burthen of an honor
Unto which she was not born."

'Were it not better to bestow
Some place and power on me?
Then should thy praises with me grow,
And share in my degree.

. . . . . .

"How know I, if thou shouldst me raise,
That I should then raise thee?
Perhaps great places and thy praise
Do not so well agree."

—*George Herbert.*

Say not this calling and vocation to which God has appointed me is too small and insignificant for me. God's will is the best calling, and to be faithful to it is the worthiest. God often places great blessings in little things. Should thy proud heart learn humility and resignation by this humble work, wouldest thou not have high wages for thy low service?—*From the German.*

XVI.

Ruth i. 16.—"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

This is a brave, outspoken confession of faith, and it is made by a woman, a young woman, a poor woman, a widow woman, a foreigner. Her mother-in-law ought to have been cheered, notwithstanding her sharp afflictions, because her great temporal loss was accompanied by a greater spiritual gain. She lost her home in Moab, but found the soul of her daughter. Naomi's return to her true place brought Ruth to a decision; when Christians become consistent, their children and friends frequently become converted.

I. AFFECTION FOR THE GODLY SHOULD INFLUENCE US TO GODLINESS.

Many forces combine to effect this:

1. There is the influence of companionship. We ought to be affected by godly people more than we are by the wicked, since we should lend ourselves to their influence.
2. The influence of admiration. Imitation is the most sincere praise; what we favor we follow. Let us therefore copy the saints.
3. The influence of instruction. When we learn from a teacher we are affected by him in many ways. Instruction is a kind of formation.

4. The influence of reverence. Those who are older, wiser, and better than we are create in us a profound respect, and lead us to follow their example.
5. The influence of desire to cheer them. This should lead many of us to be attentive to the word, willing to go with Christian friends to worship, and happy to hearken to their conversation ; for we know that this will greatly please them.
6. The influence of fear of separation. It will be an awful thing to be eternally divided from the dear ones who seek our salvation ; it is even painful to have to leave them at the Lord's Table, when they partake and we do not.

II. RESOLVES TO GODLINESS WILL BE TESTED.

1. By the poverty of the godly and their other trials. Naomi was penniless, but Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee." Poor saints are often despised saints, and young people are apt to decline the religion of the poor.
2. By counting the cost. You yourself will have to come out from your friends, as Ruth did. You will have to share the lot of God's people, as Ruth shared with Naomi. Heb. xi. 24–26.
3. By the drawing back of others. Orpah turned back with a kiss, as many do who promised well for a time. The return of Pliable must not discourage Christian.
4. By the duties involved in religion. Ruth must work in the fields. Some proud people will not submit to the rules of Christ's house, nor to the regulations which govern the daily lives of believers.
5. By the apparent coldness of believers. Naomi does not persuade her to keep with her, but the reverse. She was a prudent woman, and did not wish Ruth to come with her by persuasion, but by conviction.
6. By the silent sorrow of some Christians. Naomi said,

"Call me not Naomi, but call me Bitterness." Persons of a sorrowful spirit there always will be; but this must not hinder us from following the Lord.

III. SUCH GODLINESS MUST MAINLY LIE IN THE CHOICE OF GOD.

1. This is the believer's distinguishing possession. "Thy God shall be my God."
2. His great article of belief. "I believe in God."
3. His ruler and lawgiver. "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments." Ps. cxix. 38.
4. His instructor. "Teach me thy way, O Lord." Ps. xxviii. 2.
5. His trust and stay. See Ruth ii. 12. "This God is our God forever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death." Ps. xlviii. 14.

IV. BUT IT SHOULD INVOLVE THE CHOICE OF HIS PEOPLE. "Thy people shall be my people."

They are ill spoken of by the other kingdom.

Not all we could wish them to be.

Not a people out of whom much is to be gained.

But Jehovah is their God, and they are his people.

Our eternal inheritance is part and parcel of theirs.

A near kinsman is among them. The true Boaz is willing to take us to himself, and to redeem our inheritance.

Let us make deliberate, humble, firm, joyful, immediate choice for God and his saints; accepting their lodging in this world, and going with them whither they are going.

What say our hearers to this? Will you cling to your godly relatives? Or do you now take another road, and so choose an end far removed from theirs?

Lights.

Often have I met with cases where love to mother has created in the young bosom a desire to know mother's God. The idea of never seeing again a departed father has full often led children to seek the Lord. Is not human love a highly suitable means for heavenly love to use? Babes are induced to walk by their desire to be in their mother's arms; many have made their first essays at faith because they would fain give a dear parent delight.

The converted freedman gave happy expression to his decided adhesion to Christ when he said, "I have got safe past de *go-back corner*. I'm goin' all de journey home. And if you don't see me at de first of them twelve gates up dere, just look on to de next one, for I'm bound to be dere." Alas! for thousands in all our congregations; they never get by the "go-back corner."—*Dr. Cuyler.*

The power of Christian character shining forth from the face, form, and through the speech of a Christian man, is finely illustrated in the following incident: An Afghan once spent an hour in the company of Dr. William Marsh, of England. When he heard that Dr. Marsh was dead, he said, "His religion shall now be my religion; his God shall be my God; for I must go where he is, and see his face again."

I know his sackcloth and ashes are better than the fool's laughter.—*Rutherford.*

In a memoir of the Rev. G. G. Letters, it is stated that he was converted at a prayer-meeting one Sabbath evening. That same evening, as his mother sat with her children by the fire, she talked of the delight it would give her if they, as one family, were travelling together on the King's highway. Suddenly George sprang up, and looking around him, said, with calm, resolute voice, "I, for one, have decided for Christ."—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.*

Open union with the people of God is most desirable. It would argue disloyalty in a soldier if he would not wear his regimentals and refused to take his place in the ranks. True, he might fight alone, but it would probably turn out to be a sorry business. If God's people will not be ashamed of us we need not be ashamed of them. I should not like to go into a public assembly disguised in the dress of a thief; I prefer my own clothes, and I cannot understand how Christians can bear themselves in the array of worldlings.

XVII.

1 Samuel xvii. 47.—"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

There are always two ways of handling the same doctrine. The truth in the text may be used as a narcotic or as a stimulant. Some are so wicked as to say that if it be the Lord's battle, we are excused from fighting; as if, seeing the harvest is the Lord's, we might justly refuse to sow or reap. We see how David used this truth; it fired his soul and nerved his arm. We are all battling on one side or the other, and the worst of all are those who boast their neutrality. To the Christian man these words are so true that he may emblazon them on his banner, and write them as the headline of "the book of the wars of the Lord."

I. THE GREAT FACT: "The battle is the Lord's."

1. Inasmuch as it is for truth, right, holiness, love, and all those things which the Lord loves, the battle is the Lord's. Ps. xlv. 4.
2. His name and glory are the object of it. It is his honor to see righteousness established in the earth. The gospel greatly glorifies God; men strike at the divine honor when they oppose it, and the Lord will vindicate his own name; thus our conflict becomes God's battle. Is. xl. 5.
3. We fight only by his power. The Holy Ghost is our strength; we can do nothing without the Lord;

hence the battle is his in the highest degree. 2 Chron. xiii. 12, xx. 12.

4. He has bidden us fight. At our monarch's bidding we go upon this warfare. We are not free-lances on our own account, but warriors under his command. 1 Tim. vi. 12.
5. He has bound himself to fight this battle. The reward promised to his Son, the covenant of grace, and the distinct pledges of his word, make it his battle. His fidelity is engaged to cause the Lord Jesus to divide the spoil with the strong. He must bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Rom. xvi. 20.
6. When the battle is fully won, the glory will be unto the Lord alone. Ps. xcviii. 1. "He hath triumphed gloriously." Ex. xv. 1.

II. Its influence on our minds.

1. We make light of opposition. Who can stand against the Lord?
2. We are not cowed by our weakness. "When I am weak then am I strong." The Lord will make us mighty in his own fight.
3. We throw ourselves into the work heartily. We owe so much to the Lord Jesus that we must fight for him. 1 Cor. xvi. 13.
4. We choose the best weapons. We dare not fire the Lord's cannons with the devil's powder. Love, truth, zeal, prayer, and patience should be at their best in God's battle. 2 Cor. x. 4.
5. We are confident of victory. Can the Lord be defeated? He vanquished Pharaoh, and he will do the same with Satan in due season. 1 Cor. xv. 25.

III. Lessons in connection with it.

Make it God's cause. Never let it sink into a selfish matter.

By your motive. Aim at his glory only. Keep clear of all sinister designs.

By your method. Contend for the faith as Jesus would have contended, and not in a way which the Lord would disapprove.

By your faith. Can you not trust God to fight his own battles?

Do not forget that it is the Lord's cause.

Or you will bring self into it.

You will begin to judge the conflict; and as it is on too huge a scale for human comprehension, you will fall into many errors, expecting defeat where victory is sure, or hoping for success in ways which lead to disaster.

You will be enervated by fear, for the battle must end in your destruction if the Lord's hand be not with you.

Since it is his battle:

Be happy if personally defeated; for Jesus is still highly exalted.

Be calm and confident always; for there cannot be the smallest cause for fear as to the ultimate issue. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Is. xxx. 15.

This assembly does know that the battle is the Lord's. Does it not? Are all in this assembly on the conquering side? Why not look to him who is himself our salvation? He needs not our sword or spear; but will himself deliver those who trust in him.

Aids to Attention.

Mr. Oncken told me that he was summoned before the burgomaster of Hamburg, who bade him cease from holding religious meetings. "Do you see that little finger?" cried he.

"As long as I can move that finger I will put down the Baptists." "Yes," said Oncken, "I see your little finger, and I also see a great arm which *you* cannot see. As long as the great arm of God is lifted on our behalf, your little finger will have no terror for us."

We are like William of Orange, with a few followers and an empty purse, making war against the master of half the world, with the mines of Peru for a treasury. But like William, too, when questioned concerning our resources, we can reply, "Before we took up this cause we entered into a close alliance with the King of kings."—*David Gracey, in "The Sword and the Trowel."*

When Tarik the Saracen went to vanquish Spain, he informed his followers that he had been favored by heaven with a dream which had given him the fullest assurance of success. He had seen the prophet Mohammed surrounded by those holy saints and faithful companions who had adhered to his cause while he was an exile in Medina. They stood close by his couch with their swords unsheathed and their bows bent, and he heard the prophet say, "Take courage, O Tarik, and accomplish what thou art destined to perform." He then saw the prophet and his companions entering Spain as if to herald the way for the faithful followers of Islam. With a truer vision and more confident assurance may we enter the lists, go on to the struggle, and engage in the warfare of those who are fighting beneath the leadership of the cross. For, as surely as day conquers night, the cause of heaven shall prevail, and he shall reign whose right it is to reign.—*G. McMichael, in "The Baptist Magazine."*

It is not the will of God that his people should be a timorous people.—*Matthew Henry.*

It has been said of the persecuted Quakers, that, looking steadfastly at the strength of their Almighty leader, they

"Said not, who am I? but rather,
Whose am I, that I should fear?"
—*Annals of the Early Friends.*

Luther's strength lay in the way in which he laid the burden of the Reformation upon the Lord. Continually in prayer he pleaded, "Lord, this is thy cause, not mine. Therefore, do thine own work; for if this gospel do not prosper, it will not be Luther alone who will be a loser, but thine own name will be dishonored."

Our Lord does not expect us to go a warfare at our own charges. No soldier finds himself in rations or ammunition. Our King is never ungenerous; if he sends us to battle he will go with us, both to cover our head and nerve our arm. If we will but care for his cause, he will care for us. Queen Elizabeth requested a merchant to go abroad on her service, and when he mentioned that his own business would be ruined, she replied, "You mind my business and I will mind yours." If it be but the Lord's battle, we may be sure that he will see us through with it.

XVIII.

1 Samuel xviii. 3.—"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul."

1 Samuel xx. 17.—"And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

Why so many sermons on Jonah, and so few on Jonathan? Are the cross-grained more worthy of study than the gentle and generous? This noble prince counted it his joy to further the interests of the man who was to be preferred before him. There was something very beautiful in Jonathan, and this came out in his unselfish, magnanimous love of David. How much more beauty is there in the unparalleled love of Jesus to us poor sinners!

I. GREAT LOVE DESIRES TO BIND ITSELF TO THE BELOVED ONE. "Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him."

The covenant was made, not so much because of their mutual love, but because Jonathan loved David. "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." 2 Sam. i. 26.

1. *Jesus bound himself to us by covenant bonds.* He undertook the charge of us as our Surety in the covenant of grace.

He entered into our nature to represent us, thus becoming the second Adam. 1 Cor. xv. 47.

He pledged himself to redeem us with the sacrifice of himself. "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20.

He took us into union with himself. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Eph. v. 30.

He has bound up our future lives with his own. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. iii. 3. "Because I live, ye shall live also." John xiv. 19. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." John xvii. 24. "Ye in me and I in you." Seven golden words.

He has made us share in all that he has, changing garments with us, as in this narrative. 1 Sam. xviii. 4.

He could not come nearer to us, or he would.

In all these covenant deeds he proves his perfect love.

2. *Jesus would have us bound to him on our part;* therefore he would have us:

Submit ourselves to the saving power of his love.

Love him for his great love; even as David loved Jonathan.

Own that we are his by choice, purchase, and power; and do this deliberately and solemnly, as men make a covenant.

Join ourselves to his people; for he reckons them to be himself.

Show kindness to all who are his, for his sake; even as David was good to Mephibosheth. 2 Sam. ix.

More and more merge our interests in his, and find our gain in advancing his honor. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "Bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God." 1 Sam. xxv. 29. What an expression! Yet how true!

3. *If this be our Lord's desire, shall we not fulfil it?*

Let the bonds be mutual and indissoluble. Song of Sol. ii. 16.

Let us accept the priceless gifts of the Prince, and then give ourselves to him without reserve.

Let us love him as we love ourselves, for he loved us better than himself. Matt. xxvii. 42.

Let this be a time of love, a season for renewing our vows, a time of fuller self-merging into Jesus. Gal. ii. 20.

II. GREAT LOVE DESIRES RENEWED PLEDGES FROM ITS OBJECT. "Jonathan caused David to swear again."

Not out of selfishness, but from a sacred jealousy. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." See also Cant. viii. 6.

It is the only return love can receive. We can love Jesus, we can do no more. "Oh, love the Lord, all ye his saints." Ps. xxxi. 23.

It is for our highest benefit. Bound to the horns of the altar we are free. Wedded to Christ we are blessed.

We are so chill already that we have need to renew the flame of affection with fresh coals of loving communion.

We are so tempted and assailed that the more solemnly and the more often we renew our vows, the better for us.

We are most unhappy if drawn aside; every backsliding is misery. Therefore, let us be bound firmly to our Lord.

Hence he invites us to new pledges. Song iv. 8.

Our first surrender was attended with a solemn dedication.

Our baptism was his own appointed token of our being one with him in his death, burial, and resurrection. Rom. vi. 4.

Our communions should be hallowed renewals of our covenant.

"Let every act of worship be,
Like our espousals, Lord, to thee;
Like the dear hour when from above,
We first received thy pledge of love."

Our restorations from sickness ought to be remembered with special praise, and we should pay our vows in the presence of the Lord's people. Ps. cxvi. 8, 14.

Our fresh conditions should be attended with extraordinary devotion. Removal, promotion, marriage, birth of children, death of relatives, etc., are notable seasons for re-dedication.

Our times of spiritual revival, when we are full of hearty fellowship with the Lord and his saints, should be new departures.

Come and let us renew our loves at this good hour.

Let us get alone, and express our pure desires before our Well-beloved, when only he can hear.

Let us think of some *special* act of devotion by which to express our affection, and let us carry it out at once. Have we no alabaster box? Can we not wash the Beloved's feet, and kiss them with reverent affection?

Windows of Agate.

A little girl was playing with her doll in a room where her mother was busily engaged in some literary work. When she had finished her writing, she said, "You can come now, Alice; I have done all I want to do this morning." The child ran to her mother, exclaiming, "I am so glad, for I wanted to love you so much." "But I thought you were very happy with dolly." "Yes, mother, I was, but I soon get tired of loving her, for she cannot love me back." "And is that why you love me—because I can love you back?" "That is one why, but not the first or best why." "What is the first and

best why ?" "Because you loved me when I was too little to love you back." Mother's eyes filled with tears as she whispered, "*We love* HIM *because* HE *first loved us.*"

Lord Brooke was so delighted with the friendship of Sir Philip Sydney that he ordered to be engraved upon his tomb nothing but this : "Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sydney."

Christ and the believer that loves him live as if they had but one soul betwixt them. It is not the distance between earth and heaven that can separate them ; true love will find out Christ wherever he is. When he was upon the earth, they that loved him kept his company ; and now that he is gone to heaven, and out of sight, those that love him are frequently sending up their hearts unto him. And, indeed, they never think themselves intelligent in anything that is worth the knowing, until they have made their souls much acquainted and familiar with their crucified Saviour. 1 Cor. ii. 2.—*The Morning Exercises.*

"Lovest thou me ?" "Feed my sheep." It was a tender act on our Lord's part to allow Peter three times to speak his love, and then all the rest of his life to exercise that love by giving him work to do. Jesus, the Friend, asks thrice, and then appoints a token ; Peter, out of sincere love, answers thrice, and renders the life-long token. Love is conspicuous on either side.

Saints are to look upon themselves as wholly the Lord's, in opposition to all competitors. The Lord will not divide with rivals ; if ye take him these must go. The soul till it comes within the covenant is in a restless case, like a bee going from flower to flower, or a bird from bush to bush ; but when it is married to Christ it is settled with him, and breaks its league with all others.

Remember, the covenant ye have entered into is an offensive and defensive league. You are to have common friends and common foes with the Lord. His people must be your people, and his enemies your enemies.

Remember that your ears are bored to the Lord's doorposts, you have opened your mouth to the Lord, and you cannot go back. You must be his without end, and without interruption. It is a laudable practice of saints to go over the bargain again, hold by it, seal it afresh, and evermore look at themselves as the Lord's. There is a backsliding disposition in the best; but a renewal of our covenant is an antidote for this poison. Moreover, he that hath truly made such a covenant has given himself to Christ without reserve, and hath put a blank into the Lord's hand, saying, with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This is well-pleasing unto our God.—*Thomas Boston.*

XIX.

1 Samuel xxx. 20.—"This is David's spoil."

We see in David a type of the Lord Jesus, in his conflicts and victories, and as in a thousand things beside, so also in the spoil. To him as a warrior against evil the spoils of war belong. Jehovah saith, "I will divide him a portion with the great; and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Is. liii. 12. We may say of him, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey." Ps. lxxvi. 4.

I. ALL THE GOOD THAT WE ENJOY COMES TO US THROUGH JESUS.

All that we held under the law the spoiler has taken.
By our own efforts we can never gain what we have lost.
Our great Leader has made us share the spoil.

1. It was for David's sake that God gave success to the hosts of Israel.
2. It was under David's leadership that they won the battle.
   Even thus is Jesus the Captain of our salvation. Heb. ii. 10.
   Within us he has wrought a great deliverance. He has overcome the strong man, taken from him all his armor, and divided his spoils. Luke xi. 22. He can say with Job, "I plucked the spoil out of his teeth." Job xxix. 17.
   We had lost all by sin, but Jesus has restored it: "Then I restored that which I took not away." Ps. lxix. 4. "David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away" (verse 18).

Our very selves were captive; he has set us free. "David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them" (verses 18 and 19).

Our eternal heritage was forfeited; he has redeemed it. Eph. i. 14. The prey is taken from the mighty. "David recovered all."

Our enemies have been made to enrich us, and to glorify his name. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Col. ii. 15. Now is fulfilled the promise, "They that spoil thee shall be a spoil." Jer. xxx. 16.

II. That which is over and above what we lost by sin comes by Jesus. "And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil" (verse 20).

As Jesus has made us more safe than we were before the fall, so has he also made us more rich.

1. The exaltation of humanity to kinship with God. This was not ours at the first, but it is acquired for us by the Lord Jesus.

   Election, sonship, heirship, spiritual life, union to Christ, espousal to Jesus, fellowship with God, and the glory of the future wedding-feast—all these are choice spoils.

2. The fact that we are redeemed creatures, for whom the Creator suffered, is an honor belonging to none but men, and not to men except through Jesus Christ. Heb. ii. 16.

   As ransomed persons we are bound to our Redeemer by special ties. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

3. Our singular condition as creatures who have known sin,

and have been delivered from it, comes by our Lord Jesus Christ. Our perfection will be that of voluntary agents, who will forever abhor the evil from which they have been saved, and love the good unto which they have been wedded by the grace of God. This belongs not to the angels.

> "Never did angels taste above
> Redeeming grace and dying love."

4. Our resurrection, which is a gem not found in the crown of seraphs, comes by our risen Lord. 2 Cor. iv. 14.
5. Our relation to God, and yet to materialism, is another rare gift of Jesus. We are kings and priests unto God on behalf of the universe; the sanctification of mind and matter is consummated in our favored persons.
6. Our manifestation of the full glory of the Lord. Our experience will declare to all intelligent beings the choicest wisdom, love, power, and faithfulness of God. Eph. iii. 10.

Truly all these things make us cry, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Ps. cxix. 162.

II. THAT WHICH WE WILLINGLY GIVE TO JESUS MAY BE CALLED HIS SPOIL.

1. Our hearts are his alone forever. Hence, all that we have and are belongs to him. "This is David's spoil"—the love and gratitude of our lives. 1 John iv. 19.
2. Our special gifts. Our tithes and dedicated things are for him. Let us give plentifully. Mal. iii. 10. Abraham gave Melchizedek the tenth of the spoil. Gen. xiv. 20.
3. Our homage as a Church is to him. He is Head over all things to his Church. It is his reward to reign in Zion.

4. Our race must yet bow before him ; all thrones and powers acknowledge his supremacy. This also is our David's spoil.

Yield to Jesus now, and find in him your safety, your heaven.

What say you ? Are you David's spoil ?

If not, sin and Satan are spoiling you every day.

NOTABILIA.

1. Sin contracts no guilt that grace does not more than remove. 2. Sin deforms no beauty that grace does not more than renew. 3. Sin loses no blessedness that grace does not more than restore.—*Outline of Sermon on Rom. v.* 20, *by the late Charles Vince.*

In 1741, at the Northampton Assizes, a poor Irishman was sentenced to death for murder. Dr. Doddridge believed him innocent, and so exerted himself in his behalf that a respite was obtained. Nothing could be more touching than the poor fellow's expressions of gratitude. He said, "Every drop of my blood thanks you, for you have had compassion on every drop of it. You are my deliverer, and you have a right to me. If I live I am your property, and I will be a faithful servant."

We all remember the poem of "The man of Ross." Every good thing in the place came from him. Ask who did this or that,

"'The man of Ross,' each lisping babe replies."

Even so, as we survey each blessing of our happy estate, and ask whence it came, the only answer is, "This is Jesus' spoil. The crucified hand has won this for us."

A pastor in Cumberland has formed in his church a Good Intent Society, composed of poor persons who have no money to give, but yet desire to do something for the Lord Jesus.

These give one hour in the week to some charitable work, or to some labor by which they earn a few pence which is given to the service of the Lord. Each one, according to her several ability, does something distinctly for Jesus. These people find a blessing in so doing. Should we not each one regularly and systematically set aside a portion for our Lord and Saviour, and say, "This is David's spoil"?

XX.

2 Samuel vii. 27.—"For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee."

How often God does for his servants what they desire to do for him! David desired to build the Lord a house, and the Lord built him a house.

When God's servants are not accepted one way, they are another. Neither do they take it ill that the Lord puts them off from the work upon which they had set their desires; but they learn his will, bow before it, and praise him for it. David went in and sat before the Lord, and offered prayer, for he felt moved in heart, so that he could not do otherwise. When the Lord promises, we should supplicate; his giving times should create for us special asking times.

I. How did he come by his prayer? He "found in his heart to pray this prayer."

He found it, which is a sign he looked for it. Those who pray at random will never be accepted; we must carefully seek out our prayers. Job xiii. 4.

In his heart—not in a book, nor in his memory, nor in his head, nor in his imagination, nor only on his tongue. Ps. lxxxiv. 2.

It is proof that he had a heart, knew where it was, could look into it, and did often search it. Ps. lxxvii. 6.

It must have been a living heart, or a living prayer would not have been within it.

It must have been a believing heart, or he would not have found "this prayer" in it.

It must have been a serious heart, not flippant, forgetful, cold, indifferent, or he would have found a thousand vanities in it, but no prayer. Question: Would prayer be found in your heart at this time? Hosea vii. 11.

It must have been a humble heart, for such was the prayer.

Is this the way you pray? Do you answer, "I never pray"? God grant you may yet find it in your heart to do so.

Is this the way you pray? Do you answer, "I say my prayers"? How can prayers which do not come from *your* heart ever reach God's heart?

II. How did his prayer come to be in his heart?

Through the Lord's being there, and putting it there.

1. The Lord's own Spirit instructed him how to pray.

By giving him a sense of need. Great blessings teach us our necessity, as in David's case.

By giving him faith in God. When sure that God will keep his promise we are moved to plead it.

By bringing before his mind the appropriate promise. "Thou hast revealed; . . . therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee."

2. The Lord inclined him to pray.

It has been said that an absolute promise would render prayer needless; whereas the first influence of such a promise is to suggest prayer. The Lord inclined David's heart:

By warming his heart. Prayer does not grow in an ice-well.

By gladdening him with bright prospects. Prayer comes flying in by the open window of hope.

By communing with him. When God speaks to us we are moved to speak to him.

3. The Lord encouraged him to pray, by means of:

A promise spoken. "I will build thee an house."

A promise sealed home to the heart. "Thou hast revealed to thy servant."

His covenant is ordained on purpose to excite prayer. "I will yet for this be inquired of." Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

His former great mercy, his previous answers to our petitions, his immutable goodness, his undiminished power, and his unquestioned faithfulness, all lead us to pray.

His Son Jesus is an Intercessor who is always pleading with success, and this puts it into our heart to pray.

His Holy Spirit has undertaken to help our infirmity in prayer, and this again suggests prayer.

III. How may you find prayer in your hearts?

Look into your heart, and make diligent search.

Think of your own need, and this will suggest petitions.

Think of your ill desert, and you will humbly cry to the Lord.

Think of the promises, the precepts, and the doctrines of truth, and each one of these will summon you to your knees.

Have Christ in your heart, and prayer will follow. Acts ix. 11.

Live near to God, and then you will often speak to him.

Do you find prayers and other holy things in your heart? Or is it full of vanity, worldliness, ambition, and ungodliness?

Remember that you are what your heart is. Prov. xxiii. 7.

THINGS TO THE POINT.

In prayer the lips ne'er act the winning part,
Without the sweet concurrence of the heart.
—R. Herrick.

On the cover of his "Kyrie Eleison" the great musician, Beethoven, wrote, "From the heart it has come; to the heart it shall penetrate."

The Asiatic Russians say that it is only upon the Baikal—an exceedingly dangerous lake in Siberia—in autumn, that a man learns to pray from his heart.

"A great part of my time," said M'Cheyne, "is spent in getting my heart in tune for prayer."

It is not the gilded paper and good writing of a petition that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it. And to that King who discerns the heart, heart-sense is the sense of all, and that which he only regards; he listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other excellence in prayer is but the outside and fashion of it; this is the life of it.—*Leighton.*

I asked a young friend, "Did you pray before conversion?" She answered that she did after a sort. I then inquired, "What is the difference between your present prayers and those before you knew the Lord?" Her answer was, "Then I said my prayers, but now I *mean* them. Then I said the prayers which other people taught me, but now I find them in my heart."

There is good reason to cry "Eureka!" when we find prayer in our heart. Holy Bradford would never cease praying or praising till he found his heart thoroughly engaged in the holy exercise. If it be not in my heart to pray, I must pray till it is. But oh, the delight of pleading with God when the heart casts forth mighty jets of supplication, like a geyser in full action! How mighty is supplication when the whole soul becomes one living, hungering, expecting desire!

Remember, God respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are ; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how long they are ; nor the music of our prayers, how methodical they are ; but the divinity of our prayers, how heart-sprung they are. Not gifts, but graces, prevail in prayer.—*Trapp.*

XXI.

1 Kings ii. 28.—"Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar."

30.—"And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here."

Joab's conscience pricks him when he hears that Solomon is dealing with other offenders.

Joab was a remorseless warrior, yet when his own turn comes he flies from death.

Joab had little enough of religion, yet he flies to the altar when the sword pursues him.

Joab refuses to quit his shelter, and falls slain at the altar.

Many are for running to the use of external religion when death threatens them. Then they go to greater lengths than Scripture prescribes; they not only go to the tabernacle of the Lord, but they must needs cling to the altar.

I. AN OUTWARD RESORT TO ORDINANCES AVAILS NOT FOR SALVATION.

If a man will rest in external rites he will die there.

Sacraments, in health or in sickness, are unavailing as means of salvation. They are intended only for those saved already, and will be injurious to others. 1 Cor. xi. 29.

Religious observances; such as frequenting sermons, attending prayer-meetings, joining in Bible-readings, practising family-prayer; all these put together can-

not save a man from the punishment due to his sins. They are good things, but the merely formal practice of them cannot save.

Ministers. These are looked upon by some dying persons with foolish reverence. In the hour of death resort is made to their prayers at the bedside. Importance is attached to funeral sermons and ceremonials. What superstition!

Professions. These may be correct, long, reputable, and eminent; but yet they may not be proofs of safety. Connection with the most pure of churches would be a poor ground of trust.

Orthodoxy in doctrine, ordinances, and religious practices is much thought of by some; but it is terribly insufficient.

Feelings. Dread, delight, dreaminess, despondency; these have, each in its turn, been relied upon as grounds of hope; but they are all futile.

What an awful thing to perish with your hand on the altar of God!

Yet you must, unless your heart is renewed by divine grace.

The outward altar was never intended to be a sanctuary for the guilty. Read Ex. xxi. 14, where it is said of the criminal, "Thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die."

II. A SPIRITUAL RESORT TO THE TRUE ALTAR AVAILS FOR SALVATION.

We will use Joab's case as an illustration.

1. His act; he "caught hold on the horns of the altar."

We do this spiritually by flying from the sword of justice to the person of Jesus.

And by taking hold upon his great atoning work, and thus through faith uniting ourselves to his propitiation.

2. The fierce demand of his adversary. "Thus saith the king, Come forth!" This is the demand of

Unbelieving Pharisees who teach salvation by works.
Accusing conscience within the man.
Satan, quoting Holy Scripture falsely.

3. The desperate resolve of Joab. "Nay, but I will die here." This is a wise resolution, for we
Must perish elsewhere.
Cannot make our case worse by clinging to Christ.
Have nowhere else to cling. No other righteousness or sacrifice.
Cannot be dragged away if we cling to Jesus.
Receive hope from the fact that none have perished here.

4. The assured security. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John iii. 36. If you perished trusting in Jesus your ruin would
Defeat God.
Dishonor Christ.
Dishearten sinners from coming to Jesus.
Discourage saints, making them doubt all the promises.
Distress the glorified, who have rejoiced over penitents, and would now see that they were mistaken.

Come, then, at once to the Lord Jesus, and lay hold on eternal life.

You may come; he invites you.
You should come; he commands you.
You should come now; for now is the accepted time.

Cases in Point, etc.

During an epidemic of cholera, I remember being called up, at dead of night, to pray with a dying person. He had spent the Sabbath in going out upon an excursion, and at three on Monday morning I was standing by his bed. There was no Bible in the house, and he had often ridiculed the preacher; but before his senses left him he begged his servant to send for

me. What could I do? He was unconscious; and there I stood, musing sadly upon the wretched condition of a man who had wickedly refused Christ, and yet superstitiously fled to his minister.

"Will you put it down in black and white what I am to believe?" wrote a lady to the Rev. Robert Howie. "I have been told of many different texts; and they are so many that I am bewildered. Please tell me one text, and I will try to believe it." The answer came, "It is not any one text, nor any number of texts that saves, any more than the man who fled to the City of Refuge was saved by reading the directions on the finger-posts. It is by believing on the person and work of the Lord Jesus that we are brought into life; and, once born again, are kept in that life."

When a man goes thirsty to the well, his thirst is not allayed merely by going there. On the contrary, it is increased by every step he goes. It is by what he draws out of the well that his thirst is satisfied. Just so it is not by the mere bodily exercise of waiting upon ordinances that you will ever come to peace, but by tasting of Jesus in the ordinances, whose flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.—*M'Cheyne.*

The Lord Jesus is well pleased that poor sinners should fly to him, and lay hold upon him; for this is to give him due glory as a gracious Saviour, and this is to fulfil the purpose for which he has set himself apart. He claims to be a Deliverer; let us use him as what he professes to be, and so do him that honor which he most esteems. A pilot loves to get the helm in his hand, a physician delights to be trusted with hard cases, an advocate is glad to get his brief; even so is Jesus happy to be used. Jesus longs to bless, and therefore he says to every sinner, as he did to the woman at the well, "Give me to drink." Oh, to think that you can refresh your Redeemer! Poor sinner, haste to do it.

XXII.

1 Kings x. 1.—"And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions."

We may profitably consider the Queen of Sheba in her visit to Solomon, for she is given as a sign to us. Matt. xii. 42. Surely she came from Arabia the Happy ; but it is to be feared that many around us are dwellers in Arabia the Stony, for their hearts are hard as rocks. Jesus is greater than Solomon in wisdom, for he knows the Father himself, and all the riches of wisdom and knowledge are treasured up in him. It will be to our advantage to go to Jesus with all our doubts and troubles, and prove his love and wisdom.

I. LET US ADMIRE THE QUEEN'S MODE OF PROCEDURE.

1. She would prove the king's wisdom by learning from him. The best way of knowing Christ is by becoming his disciple.
2. She would prove him with many questions. Many are the knots in the line of life. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God."
3. Those she asked were hard questions.
   Beyond herself.
   Beyond her wise men.
   But not beyond the capacious mind of Solomon.
   To ask such questions was to use the rare opportunity before her.
   Great wisdom deserves hard questions.
   Use Jesus as he is. "An Interpreter, one among a thousand."

To be asked such questions would please Solomon.

Would show her belief in the report of his glory and learning.

Would also ease her own mind; for many a perplexity would be removed forever. The same is true of Jesus.

II. LET US IMITATE HER EXAMPLE, AND PROVE OUR GREATER SOLOMON WITH HARD QUESTIONS.

Here are a few of them to begin with:

1. How can a man be just with God?
2. How can God be just and the Justifier of him that believeth?
3. How can a man be saved by faith alone without works, while yet it is true that a saved man must have good works?
4. How can a man be born when he is old?
5. How is it that God sees all things, and yet no more sees the sins of believers?
6. How can a man see the Father, who is invisible?
7. How can it be true that that which is born of God sinneth not, and yet men born of God daily confess sin?
8. How can a man be a new man, and yet have to sigh because of the old man?
9. How can a man be sorrowful yet always rejoicing?
10. How can a man's life be in heaven while yet he lives on the earth?

We read that Solomon told her all her questions, and we may rest assured that Jesus will teach us all that we need to know, for "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. ii. 3.

III. LET US ATTEND TO CERTAIN QUESTIONS OF A TRULY PRACTICAL CHARACTER.

How can we come to Christ?

How can we ask hard questions of Christ?

How can he reply to us?

By his Word, his Spirit, his Providence.

How is it that none can come but those whom Jesus draws, and yet him that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out? Try both truths in your own experience, and they will prove themselves.

How is it that there is a set time and a limited day, and yet the Lord bids us come to Jesus at once? Come and see.

How is it that we have not come long ago?

Why should we not come at this very moment?

Apples of Gold for Baskets of Silver.

Philosophy was born a pagan; but she may become a Christian, and should be christened "Mary." She may be proud to sit at Jesus' feet. Hellas coming to Judea's Messiah is a rarely beautiful sight.—*Dr. Duncan.*

Questioners must be teachable. When Haydn was in London, a nobleman came to him for lessons in music, but found fault with all that Haydn said. At last, out of patience, the musician exclaimed, "I see, my lord, that it is you who are so good as to give lessons to me, and I am obliged to confess that I do not merit the honor of having such a master."

Do not suppose that Wisdom is so much flattered at having you for a pupil that she will set you easy lessons, and yet give you the gold medal.—*T. T. Lynch.*

An example of the strange riddles of Christian experience is given in one of Ralph Erskine's "Gospel Sonnets":

> "I'm sinful, yet I have no sin;
> All spotted o'er, yet wholly clean;
> Blackness and beauty both I share,
> A hellish black, a heavenly fair."

The pilgrims when staying in the house of Gaius spent their time in asking and answering such riddles.

Those who lose their way because they will not ask are rather to be blamed than pitied. Men pay a great deal to obtain the opinion of a great physician; what shall we say of sick persons who will not consult the infallible Healer, though his cures are without fee? Jesus waits to be inquired of; but the most of men had rather follow their own crude thoughts than accept his infallible teachings. Let us not be among these; but having the golden opportunity of intercourse with such a Teacher, let us bring before him every difficulty, and, like Mary, sit at Jesus' feet, and learn of him.

The hard questions of life prove us, and make us see our own *ignorance* and folly. Yet we would not be without them, for they also prove Jesus, and display to us his knowledge and wisdom. We can remember hard questions in Providence which we could not answer, but he has made them clear as noonday; hard questions of inward conflict, which he has fully resolved; hard questions as to apparently unfulfilled promises, which we now comprehend; and hard questions of gospel doctrine, which we now see to be the truth in himself. Let us go on proving our Lord, but yet never tempting him. Every fair test, though it be far more stringent than those which Sheba's queen imposed upon Solomon, Jesus is more than able to endure.

XXIII.

1 Kings x. 2.—"And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart."

It is not generally a wise thing to tell out all your heart. Samson reached the climax of folly when he did this to Delilah. Yet if we could meet with a Solomon who could solve all our difficulties, we might wisely do so.

We have a greater than Solomon in Jesus, who is incarnate Wisdom. The mischief is, that with him we are too silent, and with worldly friends too communicative. This evil should be rectified.

I. We ought to commune with him of all that is in our heart.

1. Neglect of intercourse with Jesus is very unkind; for he invites us to talk with him, saying, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Solomon's Song ii. 14. Shall our heavenly Bridegroom be deprived of the fellowship of our souls?
2. To conceal anything from so true a Friend betrays the sad fact that there is something wrong to be concealed.
3. It shows a want of confidence in his love, or his sympathy, or his wisdom, if we cannot tell Jesus all that is

in or upon our hearts. Between bride and Bridegroom there should be no secrets, or love will be wounded.

4. It will be the cause of uneasiness to ourselves if we withhold anything from him. The responsibility will all rest with us, and this will weigh heavily.
5. It will involve the loss of his counsel and help; for when we unbosom ourselves to him, he meets our case. If we hide our trouble, he may leave us to fret until we confide more fully in him.
6. Reticence toward Jesus is greatly aggravated by our usual eagerness to tell our troubles to others. Will we make a confidant of man, and hide the matter from our God?

II. WE NEED NOT CEASE COMMUNING FOR WANT OF TOPICS.

1. Our sorrows. He knows what they are, will comfort us under them, help us to profit by them, and in due time remove them.
2. Our joys. He will sober and salt them. Joy without Jesus is the sun without light, the essence of it is gone. Joy without Jesus would be as evil as the golden calf which provoked the Lord to jealousy.
3. Our service. He was a Servant, and therefore he knows our heart, and will sympathize with our difficulties. Let us speak freely.
4. Our plans. He had zeal and ardor, and was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord; he will gladly commune with us concerning all that is in our hearts to do for the Father.
5. Our successes and failures should be reported at headquarters. The disciples of the martyred John took up the body, and went and told Jesus. Matthew xiv. 12. Our Lord's own evangelists returned and told what had been done. Luke ix. 10.
6. Our desires. Holiness, usefulness, heaven; all these

awaken the sympathy of Jesus ; he prays for us about these things.

7. Our fears ; fears of falling, needing, failing, fainting, dying. To mention these to Jesus is to end them.
8. Our loves. Of earth and of heaven, toward others and to himself. That love which we dare not tell to Jesus is an evil lusting.
9. Our mysteries ; incomprehensible feelings, undefinable uneasinesses, and complex emotions, will be all the better for being ventilated in Jesus' presence.

III. NOR SHALL WE CEASE COMMUNING FOR WANT OF REASONS.

1. How ennobling and elevating is intercourse with the Son of God !
2. How consoling and encouraging is fellowship with him who has overcome the world !
3. How sanctifying and refining is union with the perfect One, who is the Lord our righteousness !
4. How safe and healthy is a daily walk with the ever-blessed Son of man !
5. How proper and natural for disciples to talk with their Teacher, and saints with their Saviour !
6. How delightful and heavenly is rapturous converse with the Beloved of our souls !

Warning to those who never speak with Jesus. Will he not say at the last, " I never knew you" ?

Complaint of those who seldom commune with him. " Is this thy kindness to thy friend ?"

Hint to those who usually live in communion with him. Be sure to keep up the holy intercourse ; and to this end be very thorough, unlock every room in your house, and let Jesus enter.

Congratulation of those who have long enjoyed his fellowship.

Things to Strike and Stick.

A workman in time of need would part with everything before his tools; for to lose them would be to lose all. Reading the Word of God and prayer are the tools of the Christian's craft; without them he is helpless. How is it, then, that when time presses, he so often foregoes these, or shortens them? What is this but to sell his tools?

If there be anything I do, if there be anything I leave undone, let me be perfect in prayer.—*Henry Martyn.*

Blessed be God that I may pray.—*David Brainerd.*

> He oft finds help who doth his grief impart,
> And to tell sorrow halfens sorrow's smart.
>
> —*Spenser.*

What would be said of a member of a family who refused to speak with his father or his brother? What a source of unhappiness to have such a person in the house! What, then, must be thought of a professed spouse of Jesus who has had no personal intercourse with him by the month together? Lack of holy communion is a very grievous thing. True love is communicative; it cannot bear to keep its secrets from its Beloved, nor to be restrained in its converse with him. Let the believer see to it that he is not like one of whom we asked, "How long is it since you had fellowship with Jesus?" and he answered, "It is so long ago that I have almost forgotten it." Was not this an evil sign?

> "Let us be simple with him then,
> Not backward, stiff, or cold;
> As though our Bethlehem could be
> What Sinai was of old."

The believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and draw near with full assurance of faith. Come and tell him all your wants and desires freely, without concealing anything from him, for that would argue distance and distrust. The stronger faith is, the more wants it tells,

and the more fully it tells them. Do you want anything of which you cannot tell your Lord? It argues either no real need, or else little faith. Strong faith hath free communion with heaven, and conceals nothing, but tells all. Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness." The word translated boldness is "*telling all.*"—*Thomas Boston.*

Sing a hymn to Jesus, when the heart is faint;
Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint:
If the work is sorrow, if the way is long,
If thou dread'st the morrow, tell it him in song;
Though thy heart be aching for the crown and palm,
Keep thy spirit waking with a faithful psalm.

—*E. Paxton Hood.*

XXIV.

1 Kings xix. 4.—"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

We may learn much from the lives of others. Elijah himself is not only a prophet but a prophecy. His experience is our instruction. Sometimes we enter into a strange and mysterious state of depression, and it is well to learn from Scripture that another has been in that Valley of Deathshade. Weary, and sick at heart, sorely tried ones are apt to faint. At such a time they imagine that some strange thing has happened unto them; but, indeed, it is not so. Looking down upon the sands of time they may see the print of a man's foot, and it ought to comfort them when they learn that he was no mean man, but a mighty servant of the Lord. Let us study:

I. ELIJAH'S WEAKNESS. "He requested for himself that he might die."

1. He was a man of like passions with us. James v. 17.

He failed in the point wherein he was strongest, as many other saints have done. Abraham, Job, Moses, Peter, etc.

This proved that he was strong not by nature, but in divine strength. He was no unfeeling man of iron, with nerves of steel. The wonder is not that he

fainted, but that he ever stood up in the fierce heat which beat upon him.

2. He suffered from a terrible reaction. Those who go up go down. The depth of depression is equal to the height of rapture.
3. He suffered grievous disappointment, for Ahab was still under Jezebel's sway, and Israel was not won to Jehovah.
4. He was sadly weary with the excitement of Carmel, and the unwonted run by the side of Ahab's chariot.
5. His wish was folly. "O Lord, take away my life."

He fled from death. If he wished to die, Jezebel would have obliged him, and he needed not to have fled.

He was more needed than ever to maintain the good cause.

That cause was also more than ordinarily hopeful, and he ought to have wished to live to see better times.

He was never to die. Strange that he who was to escape death should cry, "Take away my life!" How unwise are our prayers when our spirits sink!

6. His reason was untrue. It was not enough; and the Lord had made him, in some respects, better than his fathers.

He had more to do than they, and he was stronger, more bold, more lonely in witness, and more terrible in majesty.

He had more to enjoy than most of the other prophets, for he had greater power with God, and had wrought miracles surpassed by none.

He had been more favored by special providence and peculiar grace, and was yet to rise above all others in the manner of his departure; the chariots of God were to wait upon him.

II. God's TENDERNESS TO HIM.

1. He allowed him to sleep; this was better than medicine, or inward rebuke, or spiritual instruction.

2. He fed him with food convenient and miraculously nourishing.
3. He made him perceive angelic care. "An angel touched him."
4. He allowed him to tell his grief (see verse 10); this is often the readiest relief. He stated his case, and in so doing eased his mind.
5. He revealed himself and his ways. The wind, earthquake, fire, and still small voice were voices from God. When we know what God is we are less troubled about other matters.
6. He told him good news. "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel" (verse 18). His sense of loneliness was thus removed.
7. He gave him more to do—to anoint others by whom the Lord's purposes of chastisement and instruction should be carried on.

Let us learn some useful lessons.

It is seldom right to pray to die; that matter is best left with God; we may not destroy our own lives, nor ask the Lord to do so.

To the sinner it is never right to seek to die; for death to him is hell. The wilful suicide seals his own sure condemnation.

To the saint such a wish is allowable, only within bounds. He may long for heaven, but not for the mere sake of getting away from service or suffering, disappointment or dishonor.

To desire death may be proper under some aspects; but not to pray for it with eagerness.

When we do wish to die, the reason must not be impatient, passionate, petulant, proud, or indolent.

We have no idea of what is in store for us in this life. We may yet see the cause prosper and ourselves successful.

In any case let us trust in the Lord and do good, and we need never be afraid.

SELECTIONS.

What is this we hear? Elijah fainting and giving up! that heroical spirit dejected and prostrate! He that durst say to Ahab's face, "It is thou and thy father's house that trouble Israel;" he that could raise the dead, open and shut the heavens, fetch down both fire and water with his prayers; he that durst chide and contest with all Israel; that durst kill the four hundred and fifty Baalites with the sword—doth he shrink at the frowns and threats of a woman? Doth he wish to be rid of his life, because he feared to lose it? Who can expect an undaunted constancy from flesh and blood when Elijah fails? The strongest and holiest saint upon earth is subject to some qualms of fear and infirmity; to be always and unchangeably good is proper only to the glorious spirits in heaven. Thus the wise and holy God will have his power perfected in our weakness. It is in vain for us, while we carry this flesh about us, to hope for so exact health as not to be cast down sometimes with fits of spiritual distemper. It is no new thing for holy men to wish for death; who can either marvel at or blame the desire of advantage? For the weary traveller to long for rest, the prisoner for liberty, the banished for home, it is so natural, that the contrary disposition were monstrous. The benefit of the change is a just motive to our appetition; but to call for death out of a satiety of life, out of an impatience of suffering, is a weakness unbeseeming a saint. It is not enough, O Elijah! God hath more work yet for thee; thy God hath more honored thee than thy fathers, and thou shalt live to honor him.

Toil and sorrow have lulled the prophet asleep under this juniper-tree; that wholesome shade was well chosen for his repose. While death was called for, the cozen of death comes unbidden; the angel of God waits on him in that hard lodging. No wilderness is too solitary for the attendance of those blessed spirits. As he is guarded, so is he awaked by that messenger of God, and stirred up from his rest to his repast;

while he slept, his breakfast is made ready for him by those spiritual hands: "There was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head." Oh, the never-ceasing care and providence of the Almighty, not to be barred by any place, by any condition! When means are wanting to us, when we are wanting to ourselves, when to God, even then doth he follow us with his mercy, and cast favor upon us, beyond, against expectation! What variety of purveyance doth he make for his servant! One while the ravens, then the Sareptan, now the angel, shall be his caterer; none of them without a miracle; those other provided for him waking, this sleeping. O God! the eye of thy providence is not dimmer, the hand of thy power is not shorter; only teach thou us to serve thee, to trust thee.—*Bishop Hall.*

Elijah "arose and went for his life." But better he had stood to his task as a prophet, and answered as Chrysostom did when Eudoxia the empress threatened him. "Go tell her," said he, "I fear nothing but sin;" or as Basil did, when Valens, the Arian emperor, sent him word that he would be the death of him: "I would he would," said he; "I shall but go to heaven the sooner." Luther had his fits of fear, though ordinarily he could say, "I care neither for the Pope's favor nor fury." Gregory doubted not to say that because Elijah began to be tickled with high conceits of himself for the great acts which he had done, he was suffered thus to fear, and to fall beneath himself, for his humiliation. The like we see in Peter, scared by a silly wench; to show us how weak, even as water, we are, when left a little to ourselves.—*John Trapp.*

Who told Elijah it was "enough"? God did not; he knew what was enough for Elijah to do and to suffer. It was not enough. God had more to teach him, and had more work for him to do. If the Lord had taken him at his word, and had also said "it is enough," Elijah's history would have wanted its crowning glory.—*Kitto.*

It cannot be denied that in the expression "it is enough!" we behold the anguish of a soul which, disappointed in its fairest expectations, seems to despair of God and of the world, and is impatient and weary of the cross; a soul which, like Jonah, is dissatisfied with the dealings of the Almighty, and by desiring death, seeks, as it were, to give him to understand, that it is come to such an extremity, that nothing is left but the melancholy wish to escape by death from its sufferings. Nevertheless, a divine and believing longing accompanied even this carnal excitement in the soul of Elijah, which, thirsting after God, struck its pinions upward to the eternal light; yes, the key-note of this mournful lamentation was the filial thought that the heart of his Father in heaven would be moved toward him, that his merciful God would again shine forth upon his darkness, and comfort the soul of his servant. Thus we see, in the prayer of our prophet, the elements of the natural and of the spiritual life fermenting together in strange intermixture. The sparks of nature and of grace, mutually opposing each other, blaze up together in one flame. The metal is in the furnace, the heat of which brings impurity to light; but who does not forget the scum and the dross at the sight of the fine gold?—*F. W. Krummacher.*

I. *The cause of Elijah's despondency.* 1. Relaxation of physical strength. 2. Second cause—want of sympathy. "I, even I only, am left." Lay the stress on *only*. The loneliness of his position was shocking to Elijah. 3. Want of occupation. As long as Elijah had a prophet's work to do, severe as that work was, all went on healthily; but his occupation was gone. To-morrow and the day after, what has he left on earth to do? The misery of having nothing to do proceeds from causes voluntary or involuntary in their nature. 4. Fourth cause—disappointment in his expectations of success. On Carmel the great object for which Elijah had lived seemed on the point of being realized. Baal's prophets were slain—Jehovah acknowledged with one voice; false worship put down.

Elijah's life-aim—the transformation of Israel into a kingdom of God, was all but accomplished. In a single day all this bright picture was annihilated. II. *God's treatment of it.* 1. First, he recruited his servant's exhausted strength. Read the history. Miraculous meals are given—then Elijah sleeps, wakes, and eats; on the strength of that, he goes forty days' journey. 2. Next, Jehovah calmed his stormy mind by the healing influences of nature. He commanded the hurricane to sweep the sky, and the earthquake to shake the ground. He lighted up the heavens till they were one mass of fire. All this expressed and reflected Elijah's feelings. The mode in which nature soothes us is by finding meeter and nobler utterances for our feelings than we can find in words—by expressing and exalting them. In expression there is relief. 3. Besides, God made him feel the earnestness of life. What *doest* thou here, Elijah? Life is for doing. A prophet's life for nobler doing—and the prophet was not doing, but moaning. Such a voice repeats itself to all of us, rousing us from our lethargy, or our despondency, or our protracted leisure, "What doest thou here?" here in this short life. 4. He completed the cure by the assurance of victory. "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So, then, Elijah's life had no failure after all.—*F. W. Robertson.*

XXV.

1 Kings xx. 40.—"And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it."

A man must be hard run indeed when he cannot forge an excuse. This is a very common one for the loss of the soul, "I was very busy, and had no time to attend to religion." They say, "a bad excuse is better than none;" this is very questionable. Here is an excuse which condemned the man who made it. The man in the prophet's story was ordered to keep a prisoner, and it became his first duty to do so; but he preferred to follow out his own wishes, and attend to his private concerns, and so the prisoner "was gone." It is clear that he had power to have attended to the king's business, for he attended to his own. His excuse was a confession that he was wilfully disobedient.

I. IT IS AN EXCUSE WHICH SOME CANNOT USE.

1. They have but little to occupy them. They are noblemen, or ladies with no occupation, or persons of large leisure, or invalids who can do nothing for a livelihood, and therefore have ample time for reflection and reading.
2. They have done all their hard work, and are retired upon their savings, and find it hard to pass their time.
3. They are never busy, for they are idlers whom nothing could provoke to industry. They kill time.

II. It is an excuse which is not valid.

1. There was no absolute need to be so busy. Many people make slaves of themselves with a view to gain, when they could earn enough for their needs, and yet have abundant leisure to care for their souls.
2. To have believed in the Lord would have lessened the needful care of life, and so the pressure of business would have been lightened. The fact is that no man can afford to neglect his soul, for thus he hinders his own life-work.
3. You find time for other necessaries—to eat, drink, dress, converse, and sleep. And have you no time to feed your soul, to drink the living water, to put on the robe of righteousness, to talk with God, and to find rest in Christ?
4. You have time for diversion. Think of the many hours wasted in idle chat, unprofitable reading, or worse. If offered a holiday, or an evening's entertainment, you make time if you cannot find it. You have, then, time for weightier matters.
5. You find time for judging others, questioning great truths, spying out difficulties, and quibbling over trifles. Have you no time for self-examination, study of the Word, and seeking the Lord? Of course you have; where is it?

III. It is an excuse which accuses the person who makes it.

1. You have enjoyed many mercies in your daily work, for you have been able to attend to your business; should not these have won your gratitude?
2. You have seen many trials while busy here and there; why did they not lead you to God?
3. You have abilities for business; and these should have been used for God. Did he not give them to you? Why expend them on your own selfish money-getting?

IV. IT IS AN EXCUSE WHICH WILL WOUND THE MEMORY OF SOME.

To have worked hard for nothing; to live hard, and lie hard, and yet to fail, and die poor at last, will be sad.

To have to leave all when you have succeeded in accumulating wealth will be wretched work. Yet so it must be.

V. IT IS AN EXCUSE WHICH CANNOT RESTORE THE LOSS.

If you have lost the time, you certainly had it intrusted to you, and you will be called to account for it; but you cannot regain it, nor make up for its loss.

How wretched to have spent a life in idly travelling, collecting shells, reading novels, etc., and to have therefore left no space for serving God, and knowing the Redeemer!

Men do worse than this; they sin, they lead others to sin, they invent ways of killing time, and then say they have no time.

They give their minds to sceptical thought, to propagating atheism, undermining Scripture, or arguing against the gospel, and yet have no time to believe and live!

Call to the young to use time while time is theirs.

Call to the aged to spend the remnant of their days well.

Call to Christians to look well to their children's souls, lest they slip from under their influence while they are busy here and there.

Call to experienced believers to see to their own joy in the Lord, lest they lose it in the throng.

In London, such is the hum of business, that the great clock of St. Paul's may strike many times and not be heard. God speaks often, and men hear him not because other voices deafen them. A great earthquake happened when two armies were in

the heat of battle, and none of the combatants knew of it. Preoccupation of mind will prevent the most solemn things from having due weight with us.

Nero, when Rome was famishing, sent ships to Alexandria, not to bring corn for the starving people, but to fetch sand for the arena. He fiddled while Rome was burning. Are not many thus cruel to themselves? Are they not spending, on fleeting merriments, precious hours, which should be used in seeking after pleasures for evermore?

Whatever negligence may creep into your studies or into your pursuits of pleasure or of business, let there be one point, at least, on which you are always watchful, always alive; I mean, in the performance of your religious duties. Let nothing induce you, even for a day, to neglect the perusal of Scripture. You know the value of prayer; it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it.—*Buxton to his Son.*

King Henry the Fourth asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun which had lately happened. "No," said the duke; "I have so much to do on earth, that I have no leisure to look up to heaven." Ah, that this were not true of professors in these days! It is sad to think how their hearts and time are so taken up with earthly things, that they have no leisure to look after Christ and the things that belong to their everlasting peace.—*Thomas Brooks.*

A treatise on the excellence and dignity of the soul, by Claude, Bishop of Toul, ends thus: "I have but one soul, and I will value it."

> "Moments seize;
> Heaven's on their wing: a moment we may wish,
> When worlds want wealth to buy."
>
> —*Young.*

Grotius, the historian, cried in death, "Ah, I have consumed my life in a laborious doing of nothing. I would give all my learning and honor for the plain integrity of John Urick" (a poor man of eminent piety).

A dying nobleman exclaimed, "Good God, how have I employed myself! In what delirium has my life been passed! What have I been doing while the sun in its race, and the stars in their courses, have lent their beams, perhaps only to light me to perdition! I have pursued shadows, and entertained myself with dreams. I have been treasuring up dust, and sporting myself with the wind. I might have grazed with the beasts of the field, or sung with the birds of the woods, to much better purpose than any for which I have lived."

XXVI.

2 Kings ii. 14.—"And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

The great object to be desired is God, Jehovah, Elijah's God. With him all things flourish. His absence is our decline and death.

Those entering on any holy work should seek for the God who was with their predecessors. What a mercy that the God of Elijah is also the God of Elisha! He will also be with us, for "this God is our God, forever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death." Ps. xlviii. 14.

In great difficulties no name will help but that of God. How else can Jordan be divided but by Jehovah, God of Elijah?

Elisha sought first for the Lord, and inquired, "Where is he?" Elijah was gone, and he did not seek *him*, but his God.

He used Elijah's old mantle, and did not invent novelties; desiring to have the aid of the same God, he was content to wear the mantle of his predecessor. The true is not new.

Still we do not need antiquities from the past, nor novelties of the present, nor marvels for the future; we only want the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we shall then see among us wonders equal to those of Elijah's age. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" The old mantle, used with faith in the same God, parted the waters hither and thither. The power is where it used to be.

I. The question turned into prayer. It is as though he cried

O thou, who wast with Elijah, be thou also with me
At this day our one need is Elijah's God.

1. The God who kept him faithful must make us stand firm should we be left alone in the truth. 1 Cor. i. 8.
2. The God who heard *his* prayer must give us also the effectual inwrought prayer of the righteous man. James v. 16.
3. The God who provided for him at Cherith and Zarephath, and in the wilderness, must also supply all our needs. Ps. xxiii. 1.
4. The God who raised the dead by him must cause us to bring men up from their death in sin. 1 Kings xvii. 22.
5. The God who answered by fire must put life, energy, and enthusiasm into our hearts. 1 Kings xviii. 38.
6. The God who gave him food for a long journey must fit us for the pilgrimage of life, and preserve us to the end. 1 Kings xix. 8.
7. The God who gave him courage to face kings must also make us very bold, so as to be free from the fear of man. 1 Kings xxi. 20.
8. The God who divided Jordan for the prophet will not fail us when we are crossing into our Canaan. 2 Kings ii. 8.
9. The God who took him away in a chariot of fire will send a convoy of angels, and we shall enter into glory.

II. THE QUESTION ANSWERED. The Lord God of Elijah is not dead, nor sleeping, nor on a journey.

1. He is still in heaven regarding his own reserved ones. They may be hidden in caves, but the Lord knoweth them that are his.
2. He is still to be moved by prayer to bless a thirsty land.
3. He is still able to keep us faithful in the midst of a faithless generation, so that we shall not bow the knee to Baal.
4. He is still in the still small voice. Quietly he speaks to reverent minds; by calm and brave spirits he is achieving his purposes.

5. He is still reigning in providence to overturn oppressors (1 Kings xxi. 18, 19), to preserve his own servants (2 Kings i. 10), and to secure a succession of faithful men. 1 Kings xix. 16.
6. He is coming in vengeance. Hear ye not his chariot-wheels? He will bear away his people, but, sorely, O ye unbelievers! shall ye rue the day wherein ye cried in scorn, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

Oh, to be so engaged that we can court the presence of God!

Oh, to be so consecrated that we may expect his benediction!

Oh, to have that presence, so as to be girded with his strength!

Oh, to live so as never more to ask this question!

Auxiliary Extracts.

"God of Queen Clotilda," cried out the infidel Clovis I. of France, when in trouble on the field of battle, "God of Queen Clotilda! grant me the victory!" Why did he not call upon his own god? Saunderson, who was a great admirer of Sir Isaac Newton's talents, and who made light of his religion in health, was, nevertheless, heard to say in dismal accents on a dying-bed, "God of Sir Isaac Newton, have mercy on me!" Why this changing of gods in a dying hour?—"*Addresses to Young Men,*" *by Rev. Daniel Baker.*

1. *The God of Elijah gave him the sweet experience of keeping warm and lively in a very cold and dead generation;* so that he was best when others were worst. . . . But where is the Lord God of Elijah in these dregs of time, wherein professors generally are carried away, with the stream of impiety, from all their liveliness and tenderness that aforetime have been among them, when the more wickedness sets up its head, the more piety is made to hide its head? It is a sad evidence

that God is gone from us, when the standard of wickedness makes advances, and that of shining holiness is retreating, and can hardly get hands to hold it up.

2. *The God of Elijah gave him the sweet experience of the power of prayer.* James v. 17. . . . But where is the God of Elijah, while the trade with heaven by prayer is so very low? Alas, for the dead, cold, and flat prayers that come from the lips of professors at this day, so weak and languishing that they cannot reach heaven!

3. *The God of Elijah gave him the experience of the sweet fruits of dependence on the Lord,* and of a little going far, with his blessing. 1 Kings xvii. 16. . . . But where is the God of Elijah at this day, when what we have seems to be blown upon, that it goes in effect for nothing? Our table is plentifully covered, yet our souls are starved; our goodness sometimes looks as a morning cloud, it blackens the face of the heavens, and promises a heavy shower, but quickly proves as a little cloud, like unto a man's hand, which is ready to go for nothing; yea, this generation is blinded by the means that have a natural tendency to give light. Ah! "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

4. *The God of Elijah gave him the experience of a gracious boldness to face the most daring wickedness* of the generation he lived in, though it was one of the worst. This eminently appeared in his encounter with Ahab. 1 Kings xviii. 1. . . . But where is the God of Elijah now, while the iniquities of our day meet with such faint resistance, while a brave brow for the cause of God, a tongue to speak for him, and a heart to act, are so much wanting? The wicked of the world, though they have an ill cause in hand, yet they pursue it boldly; but, alas! the people of God shame their honest cause by their cowardice and faint appearing in it. If God give us not another spirit, more fitted for such a day, we shall betray our trust, and bring the curse of the succeeding generation on us.

5. *The God of Elijah gave him the experience of a glorious*

and powerful manifestation of himself, in a solemn ordinance, even at the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, which was ushered in with the spirit of prayer in Elijah. 1 Kings xviii. 37–39. . . . But where is the God of Elijah, when so little of the Spirit's influences is found in ordinances, even solemn ordinances? Here is the mantle, but where is the God of Elijah? Here are the grave-clothes, in which sometimes the Lord was wrapped up, but where is he himself? Communion-days have sometimes been glorious days in Scotland, and sometimes the gospel hath done much good, so that ministers have had almost as much to do to heal broken hearts as now to get hard hearts broken; but where now is the God of Elijah?

6. *The God of Elijah gave him the experience of being enabled to go far upon a meal.* 1 Kings xix. 8. But where now are such experiences, while there is so little strength in the spiritual meals to which we now sit down? This is a time wherein there is much need of such an experience; the Lord seems to be saying to his people, "Rise and eat, for the journey is long;" and what a hard journey some may have, ere they get another meal, who knows? Oh, for more feeding power in the doctrine preached among us!

7. *The God of Elijah gave him the experience of the Lord's removing difficulties out of his way, when he himself could do nothing at them:* Jordan divided. So Peter had the iron gate opened to him of its own accord; for when the Lord takes the work in hand, were it never so desperate as to us, it will succeed well with him. Sure we have need of this experience this day. How is the case of many souls so embarrassed at this day that they cannot extricate themselves, by reason of long and continued departures from God, so that all they can do is that they are fleeing and going backward! Ah! where is the God of Elijah, to dry up those devouring deeps? Enemies have surrounded the church, and brought her to the brow of the hill, ready to cast her over; where is the God of Elijah, to make a way for her escape?—*Thomas Boston.*

XXVII.

2 Kings vi. 17.—"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Faith serves the believer for eyes, and makes him see what others cannot. This keeps the man himself quiet and calm, and enables him to check the fears of those who cry, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" (verse 15).

From this narrative we learn how much may be about us, and yet it may be invisible to the natural eye. We shall use it to teach:

I. THAT THE NATURAL EYE IS BLIND TO HEAVENLY THINGS.

God is everywhere; yet sin-blinded eyes see him not.

His law touches the thoughts and intents of the heart; yet its wonderful spiritual meaning is not perceived.

Men themselves are evil, guilty, fallen; yet they see not their own wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.

Their danger is imminent; yet they sport on, blindly dancing at hell's mouth. There is a man at Brighton who wears a placard about his neck, on which are these words, "I am *quite* blind." This might suit such foolish ones.

Jesus is near, and ready to help; but their eyes are holden so that they know not that it is Jesus. He is

altogether lovely, and desirable, the sun of the soul, yet is he altogether unknown.

This want of spiritual discernment makes man ignoble. Samson blinded is a sorry spectacle; from a judge in Israel he sinks to a slave in Philistia.

This keeps a man content with the world; he does not see how poor a thing it is, for which he sweats, and smarts, and sins, and sacrifices heaven.

This causes many men to pursue the monotonous task of avarice; never more aspiring after better things, but pursuing the dreary round of incessant moil and toil, as blind horses go round and round the mill.

This makes men proud. They think they know all things because they see so little of what can be known.

This places men in danger. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matt. xv. 14.

II. That God alone can open man's eyes.

We can lead the blind, but we cannot make them see; we can put truth before them, but we cannot open their eyes; that work remains with God alone.

Some use artificial eyes, others try spectacles, telescopes, colored glasses, etc., but all in vain, while the eyes are blind. The cure is of the Lord alone.

1. To give sight is the same wonder as creation. Who can make an eye? In the sinner the faculty of spiritual vision is gone.
2. The man is born blind. His darkness is part of himself. "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." John ix. 32.
3. The man is wilfully blind. None so blind as those who will not see. "The blind people that have eyes." Is. xliii. 8.
4. Opening of the eyes is set down as a covenant blessing.

The Lord has given his Son "for a covenant of the people, to open the blind eyes." Is. xlii. 6, 7.

Satan counterfeited this in the garden when he said, "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." Gen. iii. 5.

III. THAT WE MAY PRAY HIM TO OPEN MEN'S EYES. We ought to cry, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see."

1. When we see sinners in trouble it is a hopeful sign, and we should pray for them with double importunity. Is. xxvi. 2.
2. When we hear them inquiring, we should inquire of the Lord for them. Their prayer should call up ours.
3. When we ourselves see much, we should see for them.
4. When their blindness astonishes us, it should drive us to our knees.
5. The prayers of others availed for us, and therefore we ought to repay the blessing to the prayer-treasury of the church.
6. It will glorify God to open their eyes; let us pray with great expectancy, believing that he will honor his Son.

IV. THAT GOD DOES OPEN MEN'S EYES.

1. He has done it in a moment. Notice the many miracles performed by our Lord on blind men.
2. He specially opens the eyes of the young. "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man." See the text.
3. He can open *your* eyes. Many are the forms of blindness, but they are all comprehended in that grand statement, "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind." Ps. cxlvi. 8.
4. He can in an instant cause you to see his grace in its all-sufficiency and nearness. Hagar and the well. Gen. xxi. 19.

V. THAT EVEN THOSE WHO SEE NEED MORE SIGHT. Elisha's young man could see; yet he had his eyes more fully opened.

1. In the Scriptures more is to be seen. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Ps. cxix. 18.
2. In the great doctrines of the gospel there is much latent light.
3. In Providence there are great marvels. To see God's hand in everything is a great attainment, specially glorifying to his name. Ps. cvii. 24.
4. In self, sin, Satan, etc., there are depths which it were well for us to see. May we be men with our eyes opened.
5. In Christ Jesus himself there are hidden glories. "Sir, we would see Jesus." John xii. 21; Heb. ii. 9.

Have you spiritual sight? Then behold angels and spiritual things. Better still—behold your Lord!

GLEANINGS.

One of the saddest conditions of a human creature is to read God's word with a veil upon the heart, to pass blindfolded through all the wondrous testimonies of redeeming love and grace which the Scriptures contain. And it is sad, also, if not actually censurable, to pass blindfolded through the works of God, to live in a world of flowers, and stars, and sunsets, and a thousand glorious objects of nature, and never to have a passing interest awakened by any of them.—*Dean Goulbourn.*

A lady once said to Turner, when he was painting: "Why do you put such extravagant colors into your pictures? I never see anything like them in nature." "Don't you wish you did, madam?" said he. It was a sufficient answer. *He* saw them, if *she* did not. So believers, like the prophet, see many divine wonders which worldlings cannot perceive.

If his word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscerned but by that holy light,
Then all is plain.

—*Cowper.*

The dying prayer of William Tyndale, the martyr, uttered "with a fervent zeal and a loud voice," was this: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!"

XXVIII.

2 Kings xvii. 25, 33, 34.—"And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord: therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of them."

"They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

"Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel."

It is as needful to warn you against the false as to urge you to the true. Conversion, which is a divine change, is imitated, and the spurious palmed off as genuine. This answers the devil's purpose in several ways: it eases the conscience of the double-minded, adulterates the church, injures its testimony, and dishonors true religion.

I. Their first estate. "They feared not the Lord."

1. They had little or no religion of any sort.
2. They were not troubled about serving the true God.
3. Probably they even ridiculed Jehovah and his people.
4. But they were near a God-fearing people, and near to king Hezekiah, under whom there had been a great revival. Such influence creates a great deal of religiousness.

II. THEIR SHAM CONVERSION. "They feared the Lord."

1. They were wrought upon by fear only; the "lions" were their evangelists, and their teeth were cutting arguments.
2. They remained in ignorance of the character of Jehovah, and only wished to know "the manner of the god of the land." Outside religion is enough for many; they care not for God himself.
3. They were instructed by an unfaithful priest; one of those who had practised calf-worship, and now failed to rebuke their love of false gods. Such persons have much to answer for.
4. They showed their conversion by outward observances, multiplying priests, and setting up altars on high places.
5. But their conversion was radically defective; for:

There was no repentance.

No expiatory sacrifice was offered on God's one altar.

The false gods were not put away. "Every nation made gods of their own" (verse 29). While sin reigns grace is absent.

They showed no love to God. They *feared*, but did not trust or love.

They rendered no obedience to him. Even their worship was will-worship. "They feared the Lord, and *served* their own gods;" a very significant distinction.

They did not abandon false trusts; they looked not to the Lord.

Give cases.

The religious drunkard. See him weep! Hear him talk! He has a dread of God, but he serves Bacchus.

The unchaste hypocrite, whose real worship goes to the vilest lusts, and yet he dreads to be found out.

The pious Sabbath-breaker. Very devout, but serves out poison on Sundays, or prefers recreation to regeneration.

Here was energy : "they played before God with all their might." This was no dull and sleepy worship, but a bright, lively service, and yet the matter fell through.

But there was no thought as to God's mind. David confessed, "we sought him not after the due order." 1 Chron. xv. 13.

There was very little spiritual feeling. More music than grace.

The priests were not in their places, nor the Levites to carry the ark : oxen took the place of willing men. The worship was not sufficiently spiritual and humble.

There was no sacrifice. This was a fatal flaw ; for how can we serve the Lord apart from sacrifice ?

There was little reverence. We hear little of prayer, but we hear much of oxen, a cart, and the too familiar hand of Uzza.

Now, even a David must keep his place, and the Lord's command must not be supplanted by will-worship. Therefore the Lord made a breach upon Uzza, and David was greatly afraid.

May we not expect similar failures unless we are careful to act obediently, and serve the Lord with holy awe ? Are all the observances and practices of our churches scriptural ? Are not some of them purely will-worship ?

II. THE FEAR. Second text. 1 Chron. xiii. 12.

The terrible death of Uzza caused great fear. Thus the Lord slew Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire ; and the men of Beth-shemesh for looking into the ark. The Lord has said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." Lev. x. 3.

His own sense of wrong feeling caused this fear in David. for we read, "and David was displeased"

(verse 11). We are too apt to be displeased with God because he is displeased with us.

His own sense of unworthiness for such holy work made him cry, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?"

His feeling that he failed in that which God expected of his servants created a holy fear. "Sanctify yourselves, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God." 1 Chron. xv. 12.

He meant well, but he had erred, and so he came to a pause; yet not for long. The ark of God remained with Obed-edom three months, but not more (verse 14).

Some make the holiness of God and the strictness of his rule an excuse for wicked neglect.

Others are overwhelmed with holy fear; and therefore pause a while, till they are better prepared for the holy service.

III. THE JOY. Third text. 1 Chron. xv. 25.

1. God blessed Obed-edom. Thus may humble souls dwell with God and die not. Those houses which entertain the ark of the Lord shall be well rewarded.
2. Preparation was made and thought exercised by David and his people when a second time they set about moving the ark of the covenant. Read the whole of the chapter.
3. The mind of the Lord was considered. "And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders, with the staves thereof, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord" (verse 15).
4. The priests were in their places. "So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves." Men and methods must both be ruled by God (verse 14).
5. Sacrifices were offered. "And it came to pass, when

God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams" (verse 26). The great and perfect sacrifice must ever be to the front.

6. Now came the exceeding joy (verse 28).

Do we draw near to God in all holy exercises after this careful, spiritual, reverent fashion?

If so, we may safely exhibit our delight, and our hearts may dance before the Lord as king David did (verse 29).

FOR EMPHASIS.

When after long disuse ordinances come to be revived, it is too common for even wise and good men to make some mistakes. Who would have thought that David should have made such a blunder as this, to carry the ark upon a cart? (verse 7). Because the Philistines so carried it, and a special providence drove the cart (1 Sam. vi. 12), he thought they might do so too. But we must walk by rule, not by example, when it varies from the rule; no, not those examples that Providence has owned.—*Matthew Henry.*

1. *The matter and right manner of performing duties are, in the command of God, linked together.* He will have his service well done as well as really done. We must serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to oblige their servants, not only to do their work, but to do it so-and-so; and though they do the thing itself, yet if not in the manner required, it cannot be accepted.

2. *The doing of a duty in a wrong manner alters the nature of it, and makes it sin.* Hence "the ploughing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. xxi. 4). Hence prayer is accounted a howling upon their beds (Hosea vii. 14). Unworthy communicat-

ing is not counted as eating the Lord's supper (1 Cor. xi. 20). If a house be built of never so strong timber and good stones, yet if it be not well founded, and rightly built, the inhabitant may curse the day he came under the roof of it.

3. *Duties not performed according to the right order are but the half of the service we owe to God, and the worst half too.—Thomas Boston.*

XXX.

2 Chron. ii. 11.—"Then Huram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them."

Such was the character of Solomon, that even Huram could see that he was a blessing to the people over whom he ruled. Be it ours to bless others, whatever our station may be. May it be observed concerning us that, because the Lord loved the family he made us heads of it, friends to it, or servants in it; and so forth.

Even a heathen could trace great blessings to God's love; what heathens those are who do not speak of the Lord's goodness, but talk of "chance" and "good luck"!

It is a great blessing when communications between rulers savor of a pious courtesy, as these between Solomon and Huram.

This verse may well be applied to our Lord Jesus. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation thereon.

I. The love of God has made Jesus our King.

1. It is not, then, a burden to be under law to Christ; his commandments are not grievous. 1 John v. 3.
2. Jesus did not need us for subjects, but we needed to be under the rule and headship of Jesus. It is for our guidance, comfort, honor, growth, success, peace, and safety.
3. It brings us great happiness to obey our Prince. His laws are simply indications of where our felicity lies.

4. The personal character of our King is such that it is a great blessing to his subjects to have him as their Monarch.

So wise ; therefore able to judge and to direct.

So powerful ; therefore able to enrich and to defend.

So gracious ; therefore laying himself out to benefit us all.

So holy ; therefore elevating and purifying his people. In this Solomon failed, but Jesus succeeded.

5. His relationship to us makes it a great blessing to have him for our King. We are not under the tyranny of a stranger ; but to us is fulfilled the word of the prophet—"Their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them." Jer. xxx. 21.

The Lord Jesus is to all of us who are believers :

Our Brother. Therefore it is no bondage to follow him.

Our Redeemer. Therefore it is joy to own his property in us.

Our Husband. Who would not do the bidding of one so loving ?

It is a delight to obey him in all things who has blessed us in all things.

II. THE LOVE OF GOD HAS MADE US THE SUBJECTS OF JESUS.

1. We see this in the choice which the Lord has made of us.

We were like Israel :

Insignificant in rank, power, or wisdom.

Erring, and continually apt to revolt from our King.

Poor, and therefore unable to pay him any great revenue.

Feeble, and therefore no help to him in his grand designs.

Fickle, and consequently a wretched people to rule and lead.

2. We see this in his subduing us.

We began with rebellion, but our Prince conquered us, and brought us under happy subjection because of his great love.

3. We see this in the healthy order he maintains. It is good for us to be under so wise a rule. Love gives rebels a powerful, gracious, and forbearing ruler. A firm hand and a loving heart will tame the unruly, and be a boon to them.
4. We see this in the peace which he creates; the quiet within and without; in the heart and in the church. 1 Kings iv. 24.
5. We see this in the plenty which he scatters. "And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance." 2 Chron. i. 15. Far greater are the riches of grace which the reign of Jesus brings to us.
6. We see this in the honor he puts upon us, making us all to be kings and priests with him. Rev. i. 5, 6.

III. OUR LOVE TO GOD MAKES THE REIGN OF JESUS BLESSED TO US.

1. It makes his courts our delight.
2. It makes his service our recreation.
3. It makes his revenue our riches.
4. It makes his glory our honor.
5. It makes his cross our crown.
6. It makes himself our heaven.

Lord, bless thy people, by keeping them loyal and obedient.

Lord, bless rebellious ones, by bringing them to bow before so gracious and wise a Prince.

Lord, we now bless thee for exalting Jesus, to be a Prince and a Saviour to us. May his Spirit rest upon us!

XXXI.

2 Chronicles xii. 14.—"And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

This is the summing up of Rehoboam's life: he was not so bad as some, but he did evil in various ways, not so much from design as from neglect.

The evil effects of the father's sin and the mother's idolatry were seen in their son, yet there was another cause—namely, a want of heart preparation. The son of Solomon very naturally desired many wives (2 Chron. xi. 23); and it was no marvel that the child of Naamah the Ammonitess allowed images and groves to defile the land; yet there was a deeper cause of his life's evil, and that lay in himself. His heart was not thorough with the Lord, and he, himself, was not carefully consecrated to the worship of Jehovah. He might have done well had he not been Rehoboam the Unready.

I. He did not begin life with seeking the Lord.

1. He was young, and should have sought wisdom of God; but he went to Shechem to meet the people without prayer or sacrifice. 2 Chron. x. 1. That which commences without God will end in failure.
2. He leaned on counsellors, saying, "What advice give ye?" Of those counsellors he chose the worst, namely, the younger and prouder nobles. 2 Chron. x. 8. Those who reject divine wisdom generally refuse all other wisdom.
3. He committed great folly by threatening the people, and refusing their just demands; and that while as yet

he had not been accepted as their king. 2 Chron. x. 13, 14. He had none of his father's wisdom. How can they act prudently and prosperously who are not guided of the Lord?

II. He showed no heart in seeking the Lord afterward.

1. He obeyed the prophet's voice when the man of God forbade him to fight with Israel; yet afterward he forsook the law of the Lord. 2 Chron. xii. 1. He is said to have been "young and tender-hearted," which means *soft*. 2 Chron. xiii. 7.
2. He winked at the most horrible crimes among the people whom he ought to have judged. 1 Kings xiv. 24.
3. He fell into his father's sins.
4. He busied himself more for the world than for God. We hear nothing of his worship but much of his building, nothing of his faith but much of his fickleness. 2 Chron. xi. 5–12.

III. He was not fixed and persevering in his seeking the Lord.

1. For three years his loyalty to his God made him prosper, by bringing into Judah all the better sort of people who fled from Jeroboam's calf-worship (2 Chron. xi. 13–17), yet he forsook the Lord who had prospered him.
2. He grew proud, and God handed him over to Shishak (verse 5).
3. He humbled himself and was pardoned, yet he stripped the Lord's house to buy off the king of Egypt.
4. He wrought no great reforms and celebrated no great passover, yet he owned, "the Lord is righteous" (verse 6).

IV. He had no care to seek the Lord thoroughly.

Yet no man is good by accident; no one goes right

who has not intended to do so. Without heart, religion must die.

1. Human nature departs from the right way, especially in kings, who are tolerated in more sin than others.
2. Courtiers usually run the wrong way, especially the young, proud, and frivolous. Rehoboam loved the gay and proud, and gave himself up to their lead.
3. Underlings are apt to follow us and applaud us if we go in an evil path, even as Judah followed Rehoboam. Thus those who should lead are themselves led.

The kind of preparation required by me, in order to be diligent and acceptable seeking of the Lord, my God, is somewhat after this fashion :

To feel and confess my need of God in the whole of my life.

To cry unto him for help and wisdom.

To yield to his guidance, and not to follow the counsel of vain persons, nor to bluster at those around me.

To be anxious to be right in everything, searching the Scriptures, and seeking by prayer, to know what I should do.

To serve the Lord carefully and earnestly, leaving nothing to chance, passion, fashion, or whim.

Are there any professors among us of the same sort as Rehoboam ?

Are there any hopeful young men who lack whole-hearted devotion to the Lord ?

Are there any older men who have suffered already from vacillation, hesitation, or double-mindedness ?

Are there any just escaped from such trouble who nevertheless are not firm, and ready even now ?

Oh, for a clear sense of the evil and folly of such a condition !

Oh, for the confirming power of the Holy Ghost !

Oh, for vital union with the Lord Jesus !

EXAMPLES.

Before the University Boat-race comes off, the men undergo a long and severe training. They would not think of contending for the mastery without preparation; and do we imagine that we can win the race of life at a venture, without bringing under the body and cultivating the mind? The preacher studies his discourse carefully, though it will only occupy part of an hour; and is our life-sermon worthy of no care and consideration? A saintly life is a work of far higher art than the most valuable painting or precious statue, yet neither of these can be produced without thought. A man must be at his best to produce an immortal poem, yet a few hundred lines will sum it all up. Let us not dream that the far greater poem of a holy life can be made to flow forth like impromptu verse.

Well known to me was a kindly, well-disposed gentleman, who, like Rehoboam, was tender-hearted or persuasible. He was a worldling of pleasing manners, who delighted in the esteem of the circle which surrounded him. He had a great respect for religious persons, and especially for ministers; but he could not afford to be a godly man himself, for then he might have become unpopular with a large circle of worldly fashionables. He once quitted an assembly which I addressed, because he said, "I felt almost on the go, and should soon have been converted if I had not rushed out." "There," said he, "Spurgeon, I am like an india-rubber doll when you are preaching; you can make me into any shape you like; but then I get back into my old form when you have done." He was an accurate reproduction of the soft-souled son of Solomon; a very Pliable, easily persuaded to set out on pilgrimage, but equally ready to return at the world's call.

The parable of the two sons will come in here. Rehoboam said, "I go, sir;" but he went not. The modern Rehoboam is a perfect gentleman; if he did but know his own mind, he

would also be a man. He is inclined to obey God, but others incline him to keep in the fashion. He is like the pear which the French call *Bon Chrétien*, very promising, but apt to become sleepy, and to rot at the core. This sort of people is not of much use either to the good cause or to its opposite.

XXXII.

2 Chron. xx. 4.—"And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."

The sudden news of a great invasion came to Jehoshaphat, and, like a true man of God, he set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast. The people came together with all speed, and the whole nation earnestly cried to the Lord for his aid.

Let us notice carefully :

I. How they asked help.

They expressed their confidence ; Jehoshaphat cried, "Are not thou God in heaven? In thine hand is there not power and might?" (verse 6).

They pleaded his past acts. "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land?" (verse 7).

They urged the promise given at the dedication of the temple. Read verse 9. "Thou wilt hear and help."

They confessed their condition ; humbly did they acknowledge their danger and their impotence. They had :

No power. "We have no might against this great company."

No plan. "Neither know we what to do" (verse 12).

No allies. Their wives and their little ones only increased their care (verse 13).

They then lifted their souls to God. "Our eyes are

upon thee." Where could they look with more certainty?

II. How they received it.

By renewed assurance. "The Lord will be with you" (verse 17).

By the calming of their fears. "Be not afraid." "Fear not, nor be dismayed." Courage keeps the field, but fear flies.

By urging them to greater faith. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established" (verse 20).

By distinct direction. "To-morrow go ye down against them; ye shall find them at the end of the brook" (verse 16).

By actual deliverance. The Moabites and Ammonites slew the Edomites, and Israel triumphed without striking a blow.

It shall be greatly to our joy to see the right hand of the Lord getting us the victory.

III. How they acted by this help.

They worshipped. With every sign of reverence, the king and his people bowed before Jehovah (verse 18). Worship girds us for warfare.

They praised. Before they received the mercy, "He appointed singers unto the Lord." Read verse 21.

They went forth, preceded by the singers, till they reached "the watch-tower in the wilderness" (verse 24).

They saw the promise fulfilled. "They looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies" (verse 24).

They gathered the spoil. "They were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much" (verse 25).

They blessed the Lord (verse 26). The valley of Berachah heard their joyful notes, and then they

returned to the house of the Lord with harps and psalteries and trumpets.

They had rest. "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about" (verse 30). God's victories end the war. The fear of God fell on all the kingdoms, and they dared not invade Judah.

Let us when in difficulties have immediate resort to the Lord.

Let us do this in the spirit of confidence and praise.

Is there not a cause for our assembling even now to plead against the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites of superstition, worldliness, and infidelity?

OBSERVATIONS.

This chapter, which begins with danger, fear, and trouble all round, ends with joy, peace, quiet, and rest. Two words seem to stand out in this chapter—PRAISE and PRAYER—twin sisters which should always go together. One word links them here —FAITH.

"Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord." His good example was soon followed. "Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord." What a prayer-meeting —a real one, a united one, with a definite object, and the king presiding! Notice the prayer (verse 5). It is a pattern one. Jehoshaphat felt his weakness and need; but he recognized that God is all, and over all, and has all power and might. He brings forward every plea and argument. He appeals to God's power and promises, to his justice and love, and winds up with simple yet prevailing faith in God himself. "We have no might, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee" (verse 12). Placing all the responsibility on God, and they just looking to him, waiting for him; God answered at once.—*Captain Dawson, in "Thoughts in the Valleys."*

XXXIII.

2 Chron. xxviii. 23.—"But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel."

Narrate the actual circumstances. Ahaz turned away from Jehovah to serve the gods of Damascus, because Syria enjoyed prosperity. "For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him; and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel."

The consequent introduction of false deities and defilement of the worship of God became the ruin of Ahaz and his kingdom.

We fear lest this should be the ruin of England; for the idols of the Papists and the doctrines of Rome are again being set up in our land. Though no country prospers in which these prevail, yet besotted minds are laboring to restore the gods of the Vatican. This subject deserves many faithful sermons.

At this time we shall turn the text to more general use.

I. The man ruining himself. Ahaz is the type of many self-destroyers. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Hos. xiii. 9.

He would be his own master. This ruined the prodigal, and will ruin millions more.

He was high-handed in sin. "He walked in the way of the kings of Israel." 2 Kings xvi. 3, 4. This is a race to ruin.

He lavished treasure upon it. He spent much but gained little. Profligacy and many other wrong ways are expensive and ruinous.

He defied chastisement. "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord." 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. This defiance of correction leads to sure ruin.

He was exceedingly clever, and curried favor with the great. He made a copy of a classic altar, and sent it home. More men perish through being too clever than by being simple.

He was a man of taste. He admired the antique and the æsthetic in religion.

He had officials to back him. "Urijah, the priest, built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus." 2 Kings xvi. 11. Bad ministers are terrible destroyers.

He imitated prosperous sinners. The king of Assyria became his type. This is ruinous conduct.

He abandoned all worship of God. "He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord" (verse 24). This is the climax of rebellion, and the seal of ruin.

But he did not prosper; the false gods were the ruin of him.

II. THE MAN IN RUINS. We leave Ahaz to think of some around us.

The man becomes eaten up with secret vice. A rotting ruin haunted by bats and owls, and foul creatures of the night.

The man of drinking habits, not fit for society, a brute, a fiend.

The man of evil company and foul speech; likely to be soon in prison, or an outcast.

The man of unbelieving notions and blasphemous conversation, lost to God, to goodness, and moral sense.

All around us we see such spiritual ruins.

Turned from holy uses to be mouldering wastes.

The man is ruined in :

Peace, character, usefulness, prospects. Worst of all, he is himself a ruin, and will be so forever.

A ruin suggests many reflections.

What it was ! What it might have been !

What it is ! What it will be !

Meditations among ruins may be useful to those who are inclined to repeat the experiment of Ahaz.

III. OTHERS RUINED WITH HIM. "They were the ruin of him, *and of all Israel.*"

Designedly. Some men by example create drunkards, by teaching make infidels, by seduction ruin virtue, by their very presence destroy all that is good in their associates.

Incidentally ; even without intent they spread the contagion of sin. Their irreligion ruins the young, their conduct influences the unsettled, their language inflames the wicked.

Sin will ruin *you* if persisted in.

Your downfall will drag down others.

Will you not endeavor to escape from ruin ?

Jesus is the Restorer of the wastes.

RELICS.

There is an Australian missile called the boomerang, which is thrown so as to describe singular curves, and to return at last to the hand of the thrower. Sin is a kind of boomerang, which goes off into space curiously, but turns again upon its author, and with tenfold force strikes the guilty soul that launched it.

We might illustrate the evil of sin by the following comparison : "Suppose I were going along a street, and were to dash my hand through a large pane of glass, what harm would I

receive?" "You would be punished for breaking the glass." "Would that be all the harm I should receive?" "Your hand would be cut by the glass." "Yes; and so it is with sin. If you break God's laws, you shall be punished for breaking them; and your soul is hurt by the very act of breaking them."—*J. Inglis.*

I have heard that a shepherd once stood and watched an eagle soar out from a cliff. The bird flew far up into the air, and presently became unsteady, and reeled in its flight. First one wing dropped, and then the other; presently, with accelerated speed, the poor bird fell rapidly to the ground. The shepherd was curious to know the secret of its fall. He went and picked it up. He saw that when the eagle lighted last on a cliff, a little serpent had fastened itself upon him; and as the serpent gnawed in farther and farther, the eagle in its agony reeled in the air. When the serpent touched its heart, the eagle fell. Have you never seen a man or woman in the church, or in society, rising and rising; the man becoming more and more influential, apparently strong, widely known, asserting power far and near; but, by and by, growing unsteady, uncertain, reeling, as it were, in uncertainty and inconsistency, and at last falling to the earth, and lying there in hopeless disgrace, a spectacle for angels to weep over and scoffers and devils to jeer at? You do not know the secret of the fall, but the omniscient eye of God saw it. That neglect of prayer, that secret dishonesty in business, that stealthy indulgence in the intoxicating cup, that licentiousness and profligacy unseen of men, that secret tampering with unbelief and error, was the serpent at the heart that brought the eagle down. —*T. Cuyler.*

Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrated it thus: "A vessel, sailing from Joppa, carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth, cut a hole through the ship's

side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, saying, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth.'" This ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression.

XXXIV.

Nehemiah i. 11.—"O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name."

Nehemiah believed that there were others praying besides himself. He was not so gloomy, so self-opinionated, so uncharitable as to think that he alone loved the house of the Lord, and prayed for it. He believed that the Lord had many praying servants besides himself. In this he was more hopeful than Elijah. 1 Kings xix. 10, 18.

Nehemiah valued the prayers of his fellow-servants, and felt supported in his own supplications by the fact that he was one of a crowd of pleaders.

Even those of the feebler sort, who could get no further than desiring to fear God, were prized by this holy man when they lifted up their prayers. The littles of supplication, when multiplied by the number of those who present them, help to turn the scale.

Who are the persons that make up this class—"*who desire to fear thy name*"? We will try to find them out.

I. THIS INCLUDES ALL WHO HAVE ANY TRUE RELIGION.

1. True godliness is always a matter of desire.
   Not of custom, fashion, habit, excitement, passion, or chance.
   Nor of unwilling dread, or compulsion, or bribery.
   Nor of boasted full attainment and conceited self-satisfaction.

2. Every part of it is a matter of desire.

Repentance, faith, love, etc. None of these can be found in a man unless he desires to have them.

Prayer, praise, service, alms, and all good deeds are matters of the heart's desire. Oh, to abound in them!

Progress and maturity of grace are never so far attained as to content us. They are still matters of desire.

So, too, usefulness among our fellows, the prevalence of truth, the prosperity of the church, and the spread of Christ's kingdom ever remain things of desire.

The same may be said of heaven, of resurrection, and of the future glories of Christ's reign on earth.

Good men are like Daniel, men of desires (Daniel ix. 23, margin). Desire is the life-blood of piety, the egg of holiness, the dawn of grace, the promise of perfection.

3. The desire is accepted where there can be no more.

In giving, in working, in self-dedication, the Lord takes the will for the deed where the power to perform is absent. To him the essence of even the most self-sacrificing action is found, not in the suffering involved, but in a desire for God's glory.

4. But without even the desire, man is in a condition of spiritual death, and all that he does is as dead as himself.

II. THIS INCLUDES MANY GRADES OF GRACE.

Not the merely temporary wishers and resolvers, for these are only blossoms, and the bulk of blossoms never turn to fruit; of such we may say with Solomon, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Prov. xiii. 4. But

1. Those who earnestly and heartily long to be right with God, though afraid to think themselves saved. These are always desiring.

2. Those who do believe, but fear lest there should be presumption in their calling themselves God's people. Their faith shows itself far more in desire than in a sense of having obtained the object of their search.
3. Those who know that they fear God, but desire to fear him more. Some of the best of men are of this order.
4. Those who wish to serve the Lord with greater freedom, constancy, delight, and power. What would they not do if they could but obtain their heart's desire?
5. Those who delight in the ways of God, and long to abide in them all their days. No man perseveres in holiness unless he desires to do so. Tender desires breed watchful walking, and, by God's Spirit, lead to consistent living.

Now all these people can pray acceptably; indeed, they are always praying, for desires are true prayers.

We need the prayers of all these people, as well as of advanced saints. The rank and file are the main part of the army. If none but eminent believers prayed, our treasury of supplication would be scantily furnished.

We should gratefully associate such beginners with us in our cries for prosperity to the cause of God; their struggling petitions will excite us all to pray better, and the exercise will increase their own prayer-power.

Lastly, LET US PRAY NOW—all of us, great and small. In the Holy Ghost let us pray, and thereby support our ministers, missionaries, and other workers, who, like Nehemiah, lead the way in holy service.

SPICES.

This description of God's servants—"who desire to fear thy name"—reminds us how largely their religion in this world consists of "desire." They have real piety, but are dissatisfied

with their attainments, and aspire to better things. Their desire is, however, to be carefully distinguished from that of many who substitute occasional good wishes for actual piety. The real Christian's desire impels him to the diligent use of all those means by which a higher life is reached. He "exercises himself unto godliness;" and what he attains he employs in spiritual and moral living. But the word used rather signifies "delight," expressing the pleasure which God's servants feel in their religion.—*Pulpit Commentary.*

That which we desire when we have it not we delight in when we obtain it. At least, this is the case in matters which are really worth desiring. Those who never pine for grace will never prize grace.

When Napoleon returned from Elba, a man at work in a garden recognized the emperor, and at once followed him. Napoleon welcomed him cheerfully, saying, "Here we have our first recruit." When even one person begins to pray for us, however feeble his prayers, we ought to welcome him. He who prays for me enriches me.

The gospel ministry is so dependent upon the power of prayer that it should be a pastor's main object to educate the praying faculty among his people. There should be numerous prayer-meetings, and these of a varied order, that women, youths, children, and illiterate persons may unite in the holy exercise. Every little helps. Grains of sand and drops of rain combine for the greatest of purposes, and achieve them. There may be more real prayer in a little gathering of obscure desirers than in the great assembly where everything is done with ability rather than with agony of desire.

Never let your pastor lose his prayer-book. It should be written in the hearts of his people. If you cannot preach, or give largely, or become a church-officer, you can, at least, pray without ceasing.

XXXV.

Neh. viii. 10.—"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Neh. xii. 43.—"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

The people who had wept before, under a sense of sin, were now called upon to rejoice. Holy mourning prepares the way for spiritual mirth. Clear shining follows rain.

It was well that they kept themselves under such control that they could weep or rejoice as they were bidden.

Their joy was remarkable for its spirituality and universality, and in these and other ways it was an example for us.

I. There is a joy of divine origin. "The joy of the Lord."

1. It rejoices in God himself, his character, his doings, his commands, and all that makes up his glory. It rejoices especially that he himself is ours. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Phil. iii. 1.
2. It possesses a deep sense of reconciliation, acceptance, adoption, and union with Christ Jesus. Joy must necessarily flow from all these founts of blessing. Is. xii. 3.

3. It enjoys assurance of future perseverance, victory, and perfection, by reason of the finished work of Christ, and the immutability and omnipotence of divine grace. Heb. vi. 17, 18.
4. It is exalted by the present personal fellowship with God out of which it springs. "We also joy in God." Rom. v. 11.
5. It is happy in the honor of service. 1 Tim. i. 12.
6. It is acquiescent in the divine will, in providence, affliction, disappointment, etc. Rom. v. 3.
7. It is full of hope for the future—a well of delight.

II. THAT JOY IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

1. It arises from considerations which strengthen. The same truths which make us glad also make us strong.
2. It is sustained by a life which is strong, even the life of Christ within us, maintained by the Holy Ghost.
3. It fortifies against temptation, or persecution, or affliction, and so it proves a present strength in time of need.
4. It fits for abounding service. He who is joyous of heart himself will seek the good of others.
5. It forbids all fear by giving a sense of ability to face every enemy.

It is calm, constant, humble, real, deep-seated strength.

III. THAT STRENGTH WHICH COMES OF HOLY JOY LEADS TO PRACTICAL RESULTS.

1. Praise. "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen" (verse 6).
2. Sacrifices of joy. "They offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced."
3. Expressions of joy. "God had made them rejoice with great joy."

4. Family happiness. "The wives also and the children rejoiced."
5. This joy insured the notice of the neighbors; "so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

IV. THAT JOY IS WITHIN REACH.

It was God's gift, but it came by:

Hearing attentively. "The ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law" (verse 3).

Worshipping devoutly. "They bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord" (verse 6).

Mourning penitently. "All the people wept, when they heard the words of the law" (verse 9).

Understanding clearly. "Great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (verse 12).

Obeying earnestly. "They made booths, and sat under the booths," etc. (verse 17).

Let us seek after joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement; for this is a true, safe, sanctifying joy. It is such an ornament as well becomes the thoroughly devoted believer while on earth, and prepares him to unite in the hallelujahs of heaven.

There is such a thing as a joyless heart. God help us to have no personal experience of it!

There are also deadly joys. From these let us flee to the living joys of grace.

SPARKLES.

It is a bad fireplace where all the heat goes up the chimney; true religion spreads joy over all around. Yet the fire warms first the chimney in which it burns, and grace comforts the heart in which it dwells. Nobody will be warmed by a cold hearth.

Faith is the key of happiness; use it at the gates of the Lord's house, and chambers of bliss shall open to you. If

your religion only admits you into vaults and dungeons it must be very incomplete. Christ comes from ivory palaces, and leads his chosen into banqueting houses.

That the Christian religion is favorable to human happiness, is, I believe, the secret conviction even of many who may not openly confess it; hence it is no uncommon thing to hear even the openly wicked say, "I believe that the real Christian is the happiest man in the world." I recollect the remark of a certain sceptic, made to myself, in the hour of affliction, "Oh, sir, you Christians have the advantage of us!" —*From "Addresses to Young Men," by Rev. Daniel Baker.*

Mr. Moody says: "I never knew a case where God used a discouraged man or woman to accomplish any great thing for him. Let a minister go into the pulpit in a discouraged state of mind, and it becomes contagious; it will soon reach the pews, and the whole church will be discouraged. So with a Sabbath-school teacher; I never knew a worker of any kind who was full of discouragement, and who met with great success in the Lord's work. It seems as if God cannot make large use of such men."

When we are weakened by sadness we do not speak attractively. Our statements lack certainty and energy. We are apt to quarrel over trifles, to be turned aside by discouragements, and in general to do our work badly. Soldiers march best to music, and sailors work most happily when they can join in a cheery note; and I am sure we do the same.

Joyful Christians set the sinner's mouth a watering for the dainties of true religion. When the prodigal returned, he was shod, and clothed, and adorned, but we do not read that the servants were to put meat into his mouth. Yet they were to feed him, and they did so by themselves feasting: "Let *us* eat and be merry." This would be the surest way to induce the poor hungry son to make a meal. If saints were happier, sinners would be far more ready to believe.

XXXVI.

Job i. 6.—"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

It is idle to inquire what day this was—perhaps it was a special Sabbath kept both in earth and heaven, a day of solemn convocation. In the earliest ages the godly gathered together for worship, with the Lord as their centre. Both in heaven and earth they so gather; the communion of saints is one. Alas, how soon the evil entered among the righteous! There is no need that the devil should have been in heaven as a place; but looking down from his throne the Lord saw Satan mingling with those who worshipped him; and he had a word for him. In a rightly-ordered congregation even the wicked have their portion.

From Satan's presence among the sons of God we learn:

I. That the mere assembling of ourselves with God's people is of no value.

1. Very clearly it is not acceptable worship to God; for nothing that Satan does can be accepted. His presence among the sons of God is presumption, and not reverence.
2. It is not beneficial to the person's own self; for the fallen spirit remained a devil, and acted like one, even in the presence of God. We must come to the Lord by faith, or our worship is dead and unprofitable.

3. It may be the occasion of more sin ; for in the assembly Satan belied Job, and plotted his destruction.

From this we learn :

II. That the best assemblies are not free from evil ones.

1. This should make us continue to meet with the saints, even though we know of some in the assembly who are false to their profession. Should the sons of God cease to meet because Satan may come among them ?
2. This should cause great heart-searching and the prompt inquiry, "Lord, is it I ?" Out of twelve apostles one was a devil, and he was with the Lord at his farewell passover.
3. This should make us watchful even while we are praying.
4. This should make ministers faithful, so that the devil may not be at home in the congregation, but may be annoyed by the truth which he hates.
5. This should make us long for the perfect assembly above, where there will be no mixture, but a sinless congregation.

III. That Satan may assemble with the sons of God.

1. To do mischief to saints.

By accusing them before the Lord, even in their holy things.

By calling off their thoughts from heavenly concerns, and making them heavy of heart and distracted with care.

By setting them to criticise instead of hearing to profit.

By sowing dissensions even in their holy service.

By exciting pride in preachers, in singers, in those who publicly pray, and in those who give. This is shown in different persons, in their style, their tone, their dress, etc.

By cooling down their ardor, abating their love, chill-

ing their praise, freezing their prayer, and, in general, killing their zeal and joy.

2. To do mischief to unconverted hearers.

By distracting attention from saving truth.

By raising doubts; by suggesting sceptical ideas, raising dark questions, and putting the man before the Master.

By suggesting delay to those who may be impressed.

By quenching prayer, hindering enjoyment, preventing profit, deadening feeling, and robbing God of glory.

By taking away the word which had been sown; as birds peck up the seed scattered on the highway.

IV. That it is possible to be all the more Satanic for assembling with the sons of God.

Satan showed the cloven foot in that sacred gathering more than ever.

1. He was brazenly impudent with his Maker.
2. He railed at God's people; even at one of the best of them, whom the Lord himself called "perfect."
3. He resolved to tempt him, to torture him, and to lead him into rebellion against God, if he could.

The devil is here at this moment.

Let us not yield to his suggestions.

Let us cry to the Lord at once, and trust in the Lord Jesus, who can preserve us from the evil one, even when he is present.

Addenda.

As soon as the sower goes forth to sow his seed, the fowls of the air go forth also. The more good is being done in any place, the more surely will Satan oppose it. Unusual provocations will be given to lukewarm professors by those whose zeal is aroused; and so there will be bickerings. Ready offence will be taken by cross-grained brethren during a revival;

for things are apt to be a little out of the regular order ; and here is another root of bitterness. Unusually large numbers of hypocrites will come forward, just as snails and slugs come creeping forth on a rainy day. Unusual bitterness will be felt by worldlings, and, as a consequence, unusual slanders will be current against the more active assailants of the enemy's kingdom. You cannot destroy a wasp's nest without being attacked in return. Yet this is better than stagnation. In a slumbering church it is the adversary's chief business to rock the cradle, hush all noise, and drive away even a fly which might light upon the sleeper's face ; Satan's great dread is lest the church should be aroused from her dreamy slumbers.

Since Satan will enter our assemblies, it behoves us to see (1) that no one of us brings him in our company ; (2) that no one gives place to him when he enters the congregation ; (3) that, like Abram with the ravenous birds, we drive him away ; or (4) that we pray with all the more earnestness, "Deliver us from the evil one."

George Marsh, who was martyred in the reign of Queen Mary, in a letter to some friends at Manchester, wrote : "The servants of God cannot at any time come and stand before God—that is, lead a godly life, and walk innocently before God, but Satan cometh also among them—that is, he daily accuseth, findeth fault, vexeth, persecuteth, and troubleth the godly ; for it is the nature and property of the devil always to hurt and do mischief, unless he be forbidden of God ; but unless God doth permit him, he can do nothing at all, not so much as enter into a filthy hog."—*Fox's Book of Martyrs.*

Did Satan review himself at the end of that Sabbath ? Did he feel any compunction at having defied his Maker, at having intruded among the saints, and at having done them wrong in their own Father's palace ? We suppose not. But hearers, who are not Satans, would do well to lay to heart the character of any one of their Lord's-days as God sees it. Sabbath sins well weighed and studied furnish plentiful material for repent-

ance. Perhaps if this theme were well applied to the conscience it might arouse the heart to penitence, and lead it to faith.

Luther was in great danger of being stabbed by a Jew; but a friend sent him a portrait of the assassin, and so he was put upon his guard. We ought to be forearmed by being forewarned. The great enemy cannot now pounce upon us at unawares while we are at our devotions; for we are not ignorant of his devices. We are bidden to watch as well as pray, to watch before we pray, and to watch when we pray.

XXXVII.

Job iii. 23.—"Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?"

Job's case was such that life itself became irksome. He wondered why he should be kept alive to suffer. Could not mercy have permitted him to die out of hand? Light is most precious, yet we may come to ask why it is given. See the small value of temporal things, for we may have them and loathe them; we may have the light of life and prefer the darkness of death under the sorrowful conditions which surround us. Hence Job asks, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures?"

We hope that our hearers are not in Job's condition; but if they are, we desire to comfort them.

I. The case which raises the question, "A man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in." He has the light of life, but not the light of comfort.

1. He walks in deep trouble, so deep that he cannot see the bottom of it. Nothing prospers, either in temporals or in spirituals. He is greatly depressed in spirit. He can see no help for his burden, or alleviation of his misery. He cannot see any ground for comfort either in God or in man. "His way is hid."
2. He can see no cause for it. No special sin has been committed. No possible good appears to be coming out of it. When we can see no cause we must not

infer that there is none. Judging by the sight of the eyes is dangerous.

3. He cannot tell what to do in it. Patience is hard, wisdom is difficult, confidence scarce, and joy out of reach, while the mind is in deep gloom. Mystery brings misery.

4. He cannot see the way out of it. He seems to hear the enemy say: "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." Ex. xiv. 3. He cannot escape through the hedge of thorn, nor see an end to it; his way is straitened as well as darkened. Men in such a case feel their griefs intensely, and speak too bitterly.

If we were in such misery, we, too, might raise the question; therefore let us consider:

II. THE QUESTION ITSELF: "Why is light given?" etc.

This inquiry, unless prosecuted with great humility and child-like confidence, is to be condemned:

1. It is an unsafe one. It is an undue exaltation of human judgment. Ignorance should shun arrogance. What can we know?

2. It reflects upon God. It insinuates that his ways need explanation, and are either unreasonable, unjust, unwise, or unkind.

3. There must be an answer to the question; but it may not be one intelligible to us. The Lord has a "therefore" in answer to every "wherefore;" but he does not often reveal it; for "he giveth not account of any of his matters." Job xxxiii. 13.

4. It is not the most profitable question. Why we are allowed to live in sorrow is a question which we need not answer. We might gain far more by inquiring how to use our prolonged life.

III. ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO THE QUESTION.

1. Suppose the answer should be, "God wills it." Is not

that enough? "I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Ps. xxxix. 9.

2. To an ungodly man sufficient answers are at hand.

It is mercy which, by prolonging the light of life, keeps you from worse suffering. For you to desire death is to be eager for hell. Be not so foolish.

It is wisdom which restrains you from sin, by hedging up your way, and darkening your spirit. It is better for you to be downcast than dissolute.

It is love which calls you to repent. Every sorrow is intended to whip you Godward.

3. To the godly man there are yet more apparent reasons. Your trials are sent:

To let you see all that is in you. In deep soul-trouble we discover what we are made of.

To bring you nearer to God. The hedges shut you up to God; the darkness makes you cling close to him. Life is continued that grace may be increased.

To make you an example to others. Some are chosen to be monuments of the Lord's special dealings; a sort of lighthouse to other mariners.

To magnify the grace of God. If our way were always bright we could not so well exhibit the sustaining, consoling, and delivering power of the Lord.

To prepare you for greater prosperity. Without your life being preserved, you could not reach that halcyon period which is reserved for you; nor would you be fitted for it if you were not disciplined by previous trials.

To make you like your Lord Jesus, who lived in affliction. For him death was no escape from his burdens; he said, "It is finished," before he gave up the ghost.

Be not too ready to ask unbelieving questions.

Be sure that life is never too long.

Be prepared of the Holy Spirit to keep to the way even

when it is hid, and to walk on between the hedges when they are not hedges of roses, but fences of briar.

SUGGESTIONS.

When it is asked why a man is kept in misery on earth, when he would be glad to be released by death, perhaps the following among others may be the reasons: (1) Those sufferings may be the very means which are needful to develop the true state of his soul. Such was the case with Job. (2) They may be the proper punishment of sin in the heart, of which the individual was not fully aware, but which may be distinctly seen by God. There may be pride, and the love of ease, and self-confidence, and ambition, and a desire of reputation. Such appear to have been some of the besetting sins of Job. (3) They are needful to teach true submission, and to show whether a man is willing to resign himself to God. (4) They may be the very things which are necessary to prepare the individual to die. At the same time that men often desire death, and feel that it would be a relief, it might be to them the greatest possible calamity. They may be wholly unprepared for it. For a sinner, the grave contains no rest; the eternal world furnishes no repose. One design of God in such sorrows may be to show to the wicked how intolerable will be future pain, and how important it is for them to be ready to die. If they cannot bear the pains and sorrows of a few hours in this short life, how can they endure eternal sufferings? If it is so desirable to be released from the sorrows of the body here—if it is felt that the grave, with all that is repulsive in it, would be a place of repose, how important is it to find some way to be secured from everlasting pains! The true place of release from suffering, for a sinner, is not the grave; it is in the pardoning mercy of God, and in that pure heaven to which he is invited through the blood of the cross. In that holy heaven is the only real repose from suffering and from sin; and heaven will be all the sweeter in proportion to the extremity of pain which is endured on earth.—*Barnes.*

XXXVIII.

Job vii. 20.—"I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?"

Job could defend himself before men, but he used another tone when bowing before the Lord; there he cried, "I have sinned." The words would suit any afflicted saint; for, indeed, they were uttered by such an one; but they may also be used by the penitent sinner, and we will on this occasion direct them to that use.

I. A CONFESSION. "I HAVE SINNED."

In words this is no more than a hypocrite, nay, a Judas, might say. Do not many call themselves "miserable sinners" who are indeed despicable mockers? Yet seeing Job's heart was right his confession was accepted.

1. It was very brief, but yet very full. It was more full in its generality than if he had descended to particulars. We may use it as a summary of our life—"I have sinned." What else is certain in my whole career? This is most sure and undeniable.
2. It was personal. *I* have sinned, whatever others may have done.
3. It was to the Lord. He addresses the confession not to his fellow-man but to the Preserver of men.
4. It was a confession wrought by the Spirit. See verse 18, where he ascribes his grief to the visitation of God.
5. It was sincere. No complimentary talk, or matter of

ritualistic form, or passing acknowledgment. His heart cried, "I have sinned," and he meant it.

6. It was feeling. He was cut to the quick by it. Read the whole chapter. This one fact, "I have sinned," is enough to brand the soul with the mark of Cain, and burn it with the flames of hell.
7. It was a believing confession. Mingled with much unbelief Job still had faith in God's power to pardon. An unbelieving confession may increase sin.

II. AN INQUIRY. "WHAT SHALL I DO UNTO THEE?"

In this question we see:

1. His willingness to do anything, whatever the Lord might demand, thus proving his earnestness.
2. His bewilderment; he could not tell what to offer, or where to turn; yet something must be done.
3. His surrender at discretion. He makes no conditions, he only begs to know the Lord's terms.
4. The inquiry may be answered negatively.
   What can I do to escape thee? Thou art all around me.
   Can past obedience atone? Alas! as I look back I am unable to find anything in my life but sin.
   Can I bring a sacrifice? Would grief, fasting, long prayers, ceremonies, or self-denial avail? I know they would not.
5. It may be answered evangelically:
   Confess the sin. "If we confess our sins," etc.
   Renounce it. By his grace we can "cease to do evil and learn to do well."
   Obey the message of peace; believe in the Lord Jesus and live.

III. A TITLE. "O THOU PRESERVER OF MEN!"

Observer of men, therefore aware of my case, my misery, my confession, my desire for pardon, my utter helplessness.

Preserver of men.

By his infinite long-suffering refraining from punishment.

By daily bounties of supply, keeping the ungrateful alive.

By the plan of salvation, delivering men from going down into the pit, snatching the brands from the burning.

By daily grace, preventing the backsliding and apostasy of believers.

We must view the way and character of God in Christ if we would find comfort; and from his gracious habit of preserving men we infer that he will preserve us, guilty though we be.

Address upon the point in hand:

The impenitent, urging them to confession.

The unconcerned, moving them to inquire, "What must we do to be saved?"

The ungrateful, exhibiting the preserving goodness of God as a motive for love to him.

Cross Lights.

No sooner had Job confessed his sin but he is desirous to know a remedy. Reprobates can cry, "Peccavi," I have sinned; but then they proceed not to say as here, "What shall I do?" They open their wound, but lay not on a plaister, and so the wounds made by sin are more putrefied, and grow more dangerous. Job would be directed what to do for remedy; he would have pardoning grace and prevailing grace upon any terms.—*Trapp.*

Job was one of those whom Scripture describes as "perfect," yet he cried, "I have sinned." Noah was perfect in his generation, but no drunkard will allow us to forget that he had his fault. Abraham received the command, "Walk before me and be thou perfect," but he was not absolutely sinless. Zecharias and Elizabeth were blameless, and yet there

was enough unbelief in Zecharias to make him dumb for nine months. The doctrine of sinless perfection in the flesh is not of God, and he who makes his boast of possessing such perfection has at once declared his own ignorance of himself and of the law of the Lord. Nothing discovers an evil heart more surely than a glorying in its own goodness. He that proclaimeth his own praise publisheth his own shame.

Man is in himself so feeble a creature, that it is a great wonder that he has not long ago been crushed by the elements, exterminated by wild beasts, or extirpated by disease. Omnipotence has bowed itself to his preservation, and compelled all visible things to form the Body-guard of Man. We believe that the same Preserver of men who has thus guarded the race watches with equal assiduity over every individual. Our own life contains instances of deliverance so remarkable, that the doctrine of a special providence needs to us no further proof. Kept alive, with death so near, we have been compelled to cry, "This is the finger of God!" Now, this preserving grace is a fair ground for hope as to forgiving love. He who has been thus careful to keep us in being must have designs for our well-being. Marvellously has he protected us, sinners though we be; and, therefore, we need not question his willingness to save us from all iniquity.

The unconditional surrender implied in the question, "What shall I do unto thee?" is absolutely essential from every man who hopes to be saved. God will never raise the siege until we hand out the keys of the city, open every gate, and bid the Conqueror ride through every street, and take possession of the citadel. The traitor must deliver up himself and trust the prince's clemency. Till this is done the battle will continue; for the first requisite for peace with God is complete submission.

XXXIX.

Job xiv. 4.—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

Job had a deep sense of the need of being clean before God, and indeed he was clean in heart and hand beyond his fellows. But he saw that he could not of himself produce holiness in his own nature, and, therefore, he asked this question, and answered it in the negative without a moment's hesitation. The best of men are as incapable as the worst of men of bringing out from human nature that which is not there.

I. Matters of impossibility in nature.

1. Innocent children from fallen parents.
2. A holy nature from the depraved nature of any one individual.
3. Pure acts from an impure heart.
4. Perfect acts from imperfect men.
5. Heavenly life from nature's moral death.

II. Subjects for practical consideration for every one.

1. That we must be clean to be accepted.
2. That our fallen nature is essentially unclean.
3. That this does not deliver us from our responsibility; we are none the less bound to be clean because our nature inclines us to be unclean; a man who is a rogue to the core of his heart is not thereby delivered from the obligation to be honest.
4. That we cannot do the needful work of cleansing by our own strength.

Depravity cannot make itself desirous to be right with God.

Corruption cannot make itself fit to speak with God.

Unholiness cannot make itself meet to dwell with God.

5. That it will be well for us to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new-creation. Jehovah brought all things out of nothing, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion; and it is to such a Worker as He that we must look for salvation from our fallen state.

III. PROVISIONS TO MEET THE CASE.

1. The fitness of the gospel for sinners. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The gospel contemplates doing that for us which we cannot attempt for ourselves.
2. The cleansing power of the blood. Jesus would not have died if sin could have been removed by other means.
3. The renewing work of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost would not regenerate us if we could regenerate ourselves.
4. The omnipotence of God in spiritual creation, resurrection, quickening, preservation, and perfecting. This meets our inability and death.

Despair of drawing any good out of the dry well of the creature.

Have hope for the utmost cleansing, since God has become the worker of it.

OBSERVATIONS.

The word which we render "clean" signifies shining, beautiful; a substance so pure and transparent that we may see through it, so pure that it is free from all spot or defilement, from all blackness and darkness. Who can bring such a clean

thing out of an unclean? The Hebrew word (*Tama*) comes near the word (*contaminatum*), which is used by the Latins for "unclean," and it speaks the greatest pollution, the sordidness and filthiness of habit, the gore of blood, the muddiness of water, whatever is loathsome or unlovely, noisome or unsightly. All these meet in and make up the meaning of this word, "Who can bring a clean thing out of this uncleanness?"—*Caryl.*

The depravity of man is universally hereditary. Adam is said to have begotten "a son in his own likeness," sinful as he was as well as mortal and miserable. Yea, the holiest saint upon earth communicates a corrupt and sinful nature to his child; as the circumcised Jew begat an uncircumcised child; and as the wheat, cleansed and fanned, being sown comes up with a husk. John iii. 6.—*Gurnall.*

It would be labor in vain to endeavor to cleanse the stream of a polluted fountain. No, the source must be changed, or the flow will be unaltered. Prune the crab as you please, it will not bring forth apples; nor will a thorn under the best cultivation produce figs. Regeneration is a change of nature, but it is by no means a natural change; it is supernatural in its origin, execution, and consequences. It must be wrought by a power from above, since there is neither will nor power to work it from below.

XL.

Job xix. 25.—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Difficulties of translation very great. We prefer a candid reading to one which might be obtained by pious fraud. It would seem that Job, driven to desperation, fell back upon the truth and justice of God. He declared that he should be vindicated somehow or other, and even if he died there would certainly come a rectification after death. He could not believe that he would be left to remain under the slanderous accusations which had been heaped upon him. He was driven by his solemn assurance of the justice and faithfulness of God to believe in a future state, and in a Vindicator who would one day or other set crooked things straight. We may use the words in the most complete evangelical sense, and not be guilty of straining them; indeed, no other sense will fairly set forth the patriarch's meaning. From what other hope could he obtain consolation but from that of future life and glory?

I. JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID CRUEL FRIENDS. He calls him his Redeemer, and looks to him in his trouble.

The Hebrew word will bear three renderings, as follows:

1. His Kinsman.

Nearest akin of all. No kinsman is so near as Jesus. None so kinned, and none so kind.

Voluntarily so. Not forced to be a brother, but so in heart, and by his own choice of our nature; therefore more than brother.

Not ashamed to own it. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 11. Even when they had

forsaken him he called them "my brethren." Matt. xxviii. 10.

Eternally so. Who shall separate us? Rom. viii. 35.

2. His Vindicator.

From every false charge; by pleading the causes of our soul.

From every jibe and jest; for he that believeth in him shall not be ashamed or confounded.

From true charges, too; by bearing our sin himself and becoming our righteousness, thus justifying us.

From accusations of Satan. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!" Zech. iii. 2. "The accuser of our brethren is cast down." Rev. xii. 10.

3. His redeemer.

Of his person from bondage.

Of his lost estates, privileges, and joys, from the hand of the enemy.

Redeeming both by price and by power.

II. JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY. He speaks of "my Redeemer," as much as to say, "Everything else is gone, but my Redeemer is still my own, and lives for me."

He means:

1. I accept him as such, leaving myself in his hands.
2. I have felt somewhat of his power already, and I am confident that all is well with me even now, since he is my Protector.
3. I will cling to him forever. He shall be my only hope in life and death. I may lose all else, but never the Redemption of my God, the Kinship of my Saviour.

III. JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY. "My Redeemer liveth."

He owned the great Lord as ever living:

As "the Everlasting Father," to sustain and solace him.

As Head of his house, to represent him.

As Intercessor, to plead in heaven for him.

As Defender, to preserve his rights on earth.

As his Righteousness, to clear him at last.

What have we to do with the dead Christ of the Church of Rome? *Our* Redeemer lives.

What with the departed Christ of Unitarians? Our divine Vindicator abides in the power of an endless life.

IV. JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS. "I know." He had no sort of doubt upon that matter. Everything else was questionable, but this was certain.

His faith made him certain. Faith brings sure evidence; it substantiates what it receives, and makes us *know*.

His trials could not make him doubt. Why should they? They touched not the relationship of his God, or the heart of his Redeemer, or the life of his Vindicator.

His difficulties could not make him fear failure on this point, for *the life* of his Redeemer was a source of deliverance which lay out of himself, and was never doubtful.

His cavilling friends could not move him from the assured conviction that the Lord would vindicate his righteous cause.

While Jesus lives our characters are safe. Happy he who can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Have you this great knowledge?

Do you act in accordance with such an assurance?

Will you not at this hour devoutly adore your loving Kinsman?

Rough Thoughts.

"*My Redeemer.*" The word has the general meaning "ransomer," "deliverer," and specially denotes one who takes up a man's cause and vindicates his rights, either by avenging him on his foes, or by restoring him or his heirs to possessions of which he has been defrauded. Job has already expressed a wish that there might be an *umpire* between him and God; then he goes further, and desires an *advocate;* then declares that he has a *witness*, one who exactly knows his rights, in heaven; then calls upon God himself to be his advocate. He now takes a stronger position, and declares his certainty that there is One who adds to all these conditions that which gives them solidity, and assures his final triumph; there lives One who will vindicate his righteousness, and clear his cause completely. —*Speaker's Commentary.*

In times of sharp trials believers are (1) driven out of themselves to look to their God, their Redeemer. (2) Driven to look within themselves for a knowledge sure and unquestioning —"I know." (3) Driven to hold by personal faith to that which is set forth in the covenant of grace—"my Redeemer." (4) Driven to live much upon the unseen—the living Redeemer, and his advent in the latter day.

Tried saints, when greatly in the dark, have been led to great discoveries of comfortable truth. "Necessity is the mother of invention." Here Job found an argument from the justice of God for his own comfort. God could not leave his sincere servant under slander; therefore if he died undefended, and years passed away so that the worms consumed his body, yet a Vindicator would arise, and the maligned and injured Job would be cleared. Thus the Spirit revealed to the afflicted patriarch a future state, a living Next-of-Kin, a future judgment, a resurrection, and an eternal justification of saints. Great light came in through a narrow window, and Job was an infinite gainer by his temporary losses.

A weak faith is glad to look off from all difficulties, for it shrinks back at them ; as Martha, considering Lazarus was four days dead, and began to putrefy, her faith began to fail her ; it was too late now to remove the gravestone. But Faith in its strength considers all these, urges these impossibilities, and yet overcomes them ; as Elijah, in his dispute with Baal's priests, took all the disadvantages to himself. "Pour on water," said he ; and again, "Pour on more water ;" faith shall fetch fire from heaven to inflame the sacrifice. "So," saith Job, "let me die, and rot, and putrefy in the grave—nay, let the fire burn my body, or the sea swallow it, or wild beasts devour it, yet it shall be restored to me ; death shall be *prædæ suæ custos*, like the lion that killed the prophet, and then stood by his body, and did not consume it." Job's faith laughs at impossibilities, is ashamed to talk of difficulties ; with Abraham, considers not his own dead body, but believes above and against hope ; knew God would restore it.—*R. Brownrig.*

These words are ushered in with a solemn preface, containing in them some notable truth : "Oh, that my words were now written ! Oh, that they were printed in a book ! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever ! For I know," etc. Surely such a passionate preface will become no other matter so well as the great mystical truths of the Christian faith.

Faith is, or should be, strongly persuaded of what it believeth. It is an evidence, not a conjecture ; not a surmise, but a firm assurance. We should certainly know what we believe : "We know that thou art a Teacher come from God." John iii. 2. "We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 69. "We know that we have a building of God." 2 Cor. v. 1. "We know that we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2. "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 58. Invisible things revealed by God should be cer-

tainly known, because God hath told us that such clear, firm apprehensions become us. Faith is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge ; not "we think," "we hope well," but "*we know*" is the language of faith. It is not a bare possibility we go upon, nor a probable opinion, but a certain, infallible truth. I put you upon this, partly because we have a great argument in the text. If Job could see it so long before it came to pass, should not we see it now ? Believers of old shame us, who live in the clear sunshine of the gospel. Job lived long before the gospel was revealed ; the redemption of souls was at that time a great mystery, being sparingly revealed to a few ; only one of a thousand could bring this message to a condemned sinner, that God had found a ransom. Job xxxiii. 23.—*Manton.*

If we are sure about anything, let it be concerning the Redeemer. If we have an indefeasible claim to anything, let it be to our Redeemer. If we cling with tenacity to any truth, let it be our Redeemer's resurrection and life. Everything hangs here ; this is the keystone of the gospel, the foundation of our faith, and the pinnacle of our hope, "Because I live ye shall live also." Oh, for more of Job's certainty, even if the cost were Job's afflictions !

XLI.

Job xxiv. 13.—"They are of those that rebel against the light."

These evidently had the light, and this should be esteemed as no small privilege, since to wander on the dark mountains is a terrible curse. Yet this privilege may turn into an occasion of evil.

Most of us have received light in several forms, such as instruction, conscience, reason, revelation, experience, the Holy Spirit. The degree of light differs, but we have each received some measure thereof.

Light has a sovereignty in it, so that to resist it is to rebel against it. God has given it to be a display of himself, for God is light; and he has clothed it with a measure of his majesty and power of judgment.

Rebellion against light has in it a high degree of sin. It might be virtue to rebel against darkness, but what shall be said of those who withstand the light? resisting truth, holiness, and knowledge?

I. Detect the rebels.

Well-instructed persons, who have been accustomed to teach others, and yet turn aside to evil; these are grievous traitors.

Children of Christian parents who sin against their early training; upon whom prayer and entreaty, precept and example are thrown away.

Hearers of the word, who quench convictions deliberately, frequently, and with violence.

Men with keen moral sense, who rush on, despite the reins of conscience which should restrain them.

Lewd professors who, nevertheless, talk orthodoxy and condemn others, thereby assuredly pronouncing their own doom.

II. DESCRIBE THE FORMS OF THIS REBELLION.

Some refuse light, being unwilling to know more than would be convenient; therefore they deny themselves time for thought, absent themselves from sermons, neglect godly reading, shun pious company, avoid reproof, etc.

Others scoff and fight against it, calling light darkness, and darkness light. Infidelity, ribaldry, persecution, and such like, become their resort and shelter.

Persons run contrary to it in their lives; of set purpose, or through wilful carelessness. Walking away from the light is rebelling against it. Setting up your own wishes in opposition to the laws of morality and holiness is open revolt against the light.

Many presume upon their possession of light, imagining that knowledge and orthodox belief will save them.

Many darken it for others, hindering its operations among men, hiding their own light under a bushel, ridiculing the efforts of others, etc.

All darkness is a rebellion against light. Let us "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

III. DENOUNCE THE PUNISHMENT OF THIS REBELLION.

To have the light removed.

To lose eyes to see it even when present.

To remain unforgiven, as culprits blindfolded for death, as those do who resist the light of the Holy Spirit.

To sin with tenfold guilt, with awful wilfulness of heart.

To descend forever into that darkness which increases in blackness throughout eternity.

IV. DECLARE THE FOLLY OF THIS REBELLION.

Light is our best friend, and it is wisdom to obey it; to resist it is to rebel against our own interest.

Light triumphs still. Owls hoot, but the moon shines. Opposition to truth and righteousness is useless; it may even promote that which it aims to prevent.

Light would lead to more light. Consent to it, for it will be beneficial to your own soul.

Light would lead to heaven, which is the centre of light.

Light even here would give peace, comfort, rest, holiness, and communion with God.

Let us not rebel against light, but yield to its lead; yea, leap forward to follow its blessed track.

Let us become the allies of light, and spread it. It is a noble thing to live as light-bearers of "The Lord and Giver of Light."

Let us walk in the light, as God is in the light; and so our personal enjoyment will support our life-work. Light must be our life if our life is to be light.

LIGHTS.

Off the coast of New Zealand a captain lost his vessel by steering in the face of the warning light, till he dashed upon the rock immediately beneath the lighthouse. He said that he was asleep; but this did not restore the wreck, nor save him from condemnation. It is a terrible thing for rays of gospel light to guide a man to his doom.

The sins of the godly have this aggravation in them, that they sin against clearer illumination than the wicked. "They are of those that rebel against the light." Job xxiv. 13. Light is there taken figuratively for knowledge. It cannot be denied that the wicked sin knowingly; but the godly have a light beyond other men, such a divine, penetrating light as no

hypocrite can attain to. They have better eyes to see sin than others; and for them to meddle with sin, and embrace this dunghill, must needs provoke God, and make the fury rise up in his face. Oh, therefore, you that are the people of God, flee from sin; your sins are more enhanced, and have worse aggravations in them, than the sins of the unregenerate.—*Thomas Watson.*

Sins of ignorance are truly sins, for every lawgiver takes it for granted that his subjects seek to know his laws. But the deliberate commission of known trespass, and the wilful neglect of known duty, have in them elements of great disloyalty. He who knew his Lord's will and did it not was beaten with many stripes. If a man puts his hand into the fire knowing that it burns, no one will pity him; if he wantonly enters a pest-house, no one can wonder that he is smitten with disease. When the ice is marked "DANGEROUS," the warning should be sufficient for any reasonable man; and when the notice is repeated at every corner, and set up in great capital letters, he who ventures on the rotten ice will be not only a fool, but a suicide, should he perish in his rashness.

XLII.

Job xxvii. 10.—"Will he always call upon God?"

A hypocrite may be a very neat imitation of a Christian. He professes to know God, to converse with him, to be dedicated to his service, and to invoke his protection; he even practises prayer, or at least feigns it. Yet the cleverest counterfeit fails somewhere, and may be discovered by certain signs. The test is here, "Will he always call upon God?"

I. WILL HE PRAY AT ALL SEASONS OF PRAYER?

Will he pray in private? Or is he dependent upon the human eye and the applause of men?

Will he pray if forbidden? Daniel did so. Will he?

Will he pray in business? Will he practise ejaculatory prayer? Will he look for hourly guidance?

Will he pray in pleasure? Will he have a holy fear of offending with his tongue? Or will company make him forget his God?

Will he pray in darkness of soul? Or will he sulk in silence?

II. WILL HE PRAY CONSTANTLY?

If he exercises the occasional *act* of prayer, will he possess the spirit of prayer which never ceases to plead with the Lord? We ought to be continually in prayer, because we are

Always dependent for life, both temporal and spiritual, upon God.

> "Long as they live should Christians pray,
> For only while they pray they live."

Always needing something, nay, a thousand things.

Always receiving, and therefore always needing fresh grace wherewith to use the blessing worthily.

Always in danger. Seen or unseen danger is always near, and none but God can cover our head.

Always weak, inclined to evil, apt to catch every infection of soul-sickness, "ready to perish." Is. xxvii. 13.

Always needing strength, for suffering, learning, song, or service.

Always sinning. Even in our holy things sin defiles us, and we need constant washing.

Always weighted with other men's needs. Especially if rulers, pastors, teachers, parents.

Always having the cause of God near our heart if we are right; and in its interests finding crowds of reasons for prayer.

III. WILL HE PRAY IMPORTUNATELY?

If no answer comes, will he persevere? Is he like the brave horse who will pull at a post at his master's bidding?

If a rough answer comes, will he plead on? Does he know how to wrestle with the angel, and give tug for tug?

If no one else prays, will he be singular, and plead on against wind and tide?

If God answer him by disappointment and defeat, will he feel that delays are not denials, and still pray?

IV. WILL HE CONTINUE TO PRAY THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF LIFE?

The hypocrite soon gives up prayer under certain circumstances.

If he is in trouble, he will not pray, but will run to human helpers.

If he gets out of trouble, he will not pray, but quite forget his vows.

If men laugh at him, he will not dare to pray.
If men smile on him, he will not care to pray.

1. He grows formal. He is half asleep, not watchful for the answer. He falls into a dead routine of forms and words.
2. He grows weary. He can make a spurt, but he cannot keep it up. Short prayers are sweet to him.
3. He grows secure. Things go well and he sees no need of prayer; or he is too holy to pray.
4. He grows infidel, and fancies it is all useless, dreams that prayer is not philosophical.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

We have heard of a child who said her prayers, and then added, "Good-by, God; we are all going to Saratoga, and pa and ma won't go to meeting, or pray any more till we come back again." We fear that many who go to the seaside, or other holiday resorts, give God the go-by in much the same manner.

There was a celebrated poet who was an atheist, or at least professed to be so. According to him, there was no God—the belief in a God was a delusion, prayer a base superstition, and religion but the iron fetters of a rapacious priesthood. So he held when sailing over the unruffled surface of the Ægean Sea. But the scene changed; and with the scene his creed. The heavens began to scowl on him; and the deep uttered an angry voice, and, as if in astonishment at this God-denying man, "*lifted up his hands on high.*" The storm increased until the ship became unmanageable. She drifted before the tempest. The terrible cry, "Breakers ahead!" was soon heard; and how they trembled to see death seated on the horrid reef—waiting for his prey! A few moments more, and the crash comes. They are overwhelmed in the devouring sea? No. They were saved by a singular Providence. Like apprehended evils, which in a Christian's experience prove to be blessings,

the wave which flung them forward on the horrid reef came on in such mountain volume as to bear and float them over into the safety of deep and ample sea room. But ere that happened a companion of the atheist—who, seated on the prow, had been taking his last regretful look of heaven and earth, sea and sky—turned his eyes down upon the deck, and there, among Papists, who told their beads and cried to the Virgin, he saw the atheist prostrated with fear. The tempest had blown away his fine-spun speculations like so many cobwebs, and he was on his knees, imploring God for mercy.—*Guthrie.*

The hypocrite is not for prayer always. He will pray when he seeth his own time. He will stint God in time as well as in measure. He will be master, not only of his own time, but of God's too. "When will the Sabbath be gone?" Amos viii. 5. Sometimes he will delight himself in the Almighty; but will he always call upon God? Every one that knows him can make the answer for him, "No, he will not;" especially in secret, where none but God's eye can behold him. Upon some extraordinary occasions, in extraordinary cases, he may seem very devout; but he is modest, he will not trouble God too far, nor too often. Ahaz will not ask a sign, even when God bids him, lest he should tempt the Lord (Is. vii. 10–12); a great piece of modesty in show, but a sure symptom of infidelity. He would not ask a sign because he could not believe the thing; not to avoid troubling of God, but himself. He seems very mannerly, but shows himself very malapert.

Thus, this hypocrite will serve God only by fits and starts, when he himself lists. He never troubles God but when God troubles him. In health, wealth, peace, he can comfort himself. He never prays but in trouble; in his affliction he will seek God early. Hosea v. 15. God is fain to go away, and return to his place, else this man would never look after him. When God hath touched him, he acquaints God with his misery, but when times grow better with him, he excludes God from his mirth.—*Samuel Crook.*

XLIII.

Job xxxiv. 33.—"Should it be according to thy mind?"

The verse is written in language of the most ancient kind, which is but little understood. Moreover, it is extremely pithy and sententious, and hence it is obscure. The sense given in our version is, however, that which sums up the other translations, and we prefer to adhere to it.

I. Do MEN REALLY THINK THAT THINGS SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND?

1. Concerning God. Their ideas of him are according to what they think he should be; but could he be God at all if he were such as the human mind would have him to be?
2. Concerning providence on a large scale, would men rewrite history? Do they imagine that their arrangements would be an improvement upon infinite wisdom? In their own case they would arrange all matters selfishly. Should it be so?
3. Concerning the Gospel, its doctrines, its precepts, its results, should men have their own way? Should the atonement be left out, or the statement of it be modified to suit them?
4. Concerning the Church. Should they be head and lord? Should their liberal ideas erase inspiration?
   Should baptism and the Lord's Supper be distorted to gratify them? Should gaudy ceremonies drive the Lord's homely ordinances out of doors? Should priestcraft crush out spiritual life? Should taste override divine commands?

Should the ministry exist only for their special consolation, and be moulded at their bidding?

II. WHAT LEADS THEM TO THINK SO?

1. Self-importance and selfishness.
2. Self-conceit and pride.
3. A murmuring spirit which must needs grumble at everything.
4. Want of faith in Christ leading to a doubt of the power of his gospel.
5. Want of love to God, souring the mind and leading it to kick at a thing simply because the Lord prescribes it.

III. WHAT A MERCY THAT THINGS ARE NOT ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND!

1. God's glory would be obscured.
2. Many would suffer to enable one man to play the Dictator.
3. We should, any one of us, have an awful responsibility resting upon us if our own mind had the regulation of affairs.
4. Our temptations would be increased. We should be proud if we succeeded, and despairing if we met with failure.
5. Our desires would become more greedy.
6. Our sins would be uncorrected; for we should never allow a rod or a rebuke to come at us.
7. There would be universal strife; for every man would want to rule and command. James vi. 5. If it ought to be according to your mind, why not according to mine?

IV. LET US CHECK THE SPIRIT WHICH SUGGESTS SUCH CONCEIT.

1. It is impracticable; for things can never be as so many different minds would have them.
2. It is unreasonable; for things ought not so to be.
3. It is unchristian; for even Christ Jesus pleased not himself, but cried, "Not as I will." Matt. xxvi. 39.

4. It is atheistic ; for it dethrones God to set up puny man.
   Pray God to bring your mind to his will.
   Cultivate admiration for the arrangements of the divine mind.
   Above all, accept the gospel as it is, and accept it now.

HELPS.

Should it be according to thy mind? Many appear to think so. If we may judge by their conduct, they think that the Most High should have consulted their ease, their fancy, and their aggrandizement. The gospel is not just what they would like it to be. Providence does not work as they desire. Few things are exactly as they should be.

Complaining mortal! Should it be according to thy mind? Is not thy mind carnal? Is it not selfish? Is it not prejudiced? If it were according to thy mind, would not God's glory be obscured? Would not others suffer? Would not thy lusts be fed? Would not thy temptations be stronger? Would not thy danger be greater?

Is not thy God wiser, kinder, and holier than thou art? Does he not love justice? Are not his mercies over all his works? True, you may be afflicted, you may be poor, you may be sickly ; what then? You are wishing for health, for a competency, for freedom from trials ; but, "should it be according to thy mind?"

Beloved, let us guard against such a spirit. It is common, but it is unreasonable, it is criminal, it is dangerous. The thing is impracticable. Your God must govern, he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. His ways are just, his plans are wise, his designs are merciful, and when the work is complete, every part will reflect his glory.—*James Smith.*

We are all very apt to believe in Providence when we get our own way ; but when things go awry, we think, if there is

a God, he is in heaven and not upon the earth. The cricket, in the spring, builds his house in the meadow, and chirps for joy because all is going so well with him. But when he hears the sound of the plough a few furrows off, and the thunder of the oxen's tread, then his sky begins to darken, and his young heart fails him. By and by the plough comes craunching along, turns his dwelling bottom side up, and as he goes rolling over and over, without a house and without a home, "Oh," he says, "the foundations of the world are breaking up, and everything is hastening to destruction." But the husbandman, as he walks behind the plough, does he think the foundations of the world are breaking up? No. He is thinking only of the harvest that is to follow in the wake of the plough; and the cricket, if it will but wait, will see the husbandman's purpose. My hearers, we are all like crickets. When we get our own way, we are happy and contented. When we are subjected to disappointment, we become the victims of despair.—*Dr. A. B. Jack, in "The Preacher and Homiletic Monthly."*

Man would have God go according to his mind in chastening and afflicting him. He would have God correct him only in such a kind, in such a manner and measure as he would choose. He saith in his heart, If God would correct me in this or that, I could bear it; but I do not like to be corrected in the present way. One saith, If God would smite me in my estate I could bear it, but not in my body; another saith, If God should smite me with sickness, I could bear it, but not in my children; or, If God would afflict me only in such a degree, I could submit; but my heart can hardly yield to so great a measure of affliction. Thus we would have it according to our minds as to the measure or the continuance of our afflictions. We would be corrected for so many days; but to have months of vanity and years of trouble is not according to our mind.

Man would have God govern (not only himself, but) the whole world according to his mind. Man hath much of this

in him. Luther wrote to Melanchthon, when he was so exceedingly troubled at the providence of God in the world, "Our brother Philip is to be admonished that he would forbear governing the world." We can hardly let God alone to rule that world which himself alone hath made.—*Caryl.*

XLIV.

Job xxxiv. 33.—"Should it be according to thy mind? He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest."

It is never wise to dispute with God.

Especially upon the matter of salvation.

No sinner seeking pardon should be so foolish as to dispute with his sovereign Saviour.

I. A QUESTION. "Should it be according to thy mind?"

Should salvation be planned to suit you? Should beggars be choosers? Should those who profess penitence become dictators?

1. What is it to which you object?

Is there something objectionable in the plan of salvation? Is it too much of grace? Is it too simple? Is it too general? Is it too humbling? Do you dislike the method of substitution? Do you rebel against the Deity of the Saviour?

Is there a cause of stumbling in the working out of salvation? Does the cross scandalize you? Do you dislike the work of the Holy Spirit? Are his operations too radical? Is regeneration too spiritual? Is holiness irksome?

Are its requirements too exact? too Puritanical?

Are its statements too humiliating? too denunciatory?

Is its term of service too protracted? Would you prefer a temporary faith? a transient obedience?

2. Should not God have his way? He is the Donor of salvation; shall he not do as he wills with his own?

3. Is not God's way best? Is not the Infinitely Good the best Controller, the best Ruler of the feast?
4. Should it be according to a mind that is ignorant? Fickle? Feeble? Selfish? Short-sighted? Is not yours such?
5. Why is *your* mind to be supreme? Why not another man's mind? You see the absurdity in that case—why not in your own?

II. A WARNING. "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose."

Whether sinners accept or refuse salvation:

1. God will perform his pleasure.
2. God will punish sin.
3. God will glorify Christ by conversions.
4. God will magnify his own name before an assembled universe.
5. God will carry on his work of mercy in the one way which he has chosen, and he will not alter one jot or tittle to please vainglorious man.

III. A PROTEST. "And not I."

1. I am not the person to be disputed with; you are not dealing with man but with God. "He will recompense it, . . . and not I." Therefore there is no use in deceit or in defiance; thus you may overcome a mortal, but not the Eternal.
2. I will not be responsible for you. You yourself are sinning, and must answer for it, and no friend or minister can stand for you when God recompenses your sin upon you.
3. I will not share in your rebellion. "Not I." We must keep clear of complicity with the obstinate man who dictates to his God. It is a grand thing to be able to say distinctly, "Not I."

IV. An invitation. "Therefore speak what thou knowest."

1. Exercise your freedom. Choose or reject; it is at your own peril.
2. Exercise your reason. Be sure that you know by personal observation and experience, and let your decision be based upon unquestionable knowledge.
3. Exercise your influence and speak as you think; but mind what you do; for an account must be given of your words.
4. Better exercise your truthfulness and bear witness to facts, rather than criticise the methods of the Lord.

Do not cavil at God's methods of grace, for certainly you cannot alter them; and if you could alter them you would not improve them.

Join not with others in their cavillings. It may be fashionable to criticise and doubt, but it is mischievous, presumptuous, and rebellious. Doubters may be in great repute among their own class, but they are poor creatures, after all. Those who are wiser than God are fools in capitals.

Decide for yourself, but let it be with knowledge and thought; and when you have decided, do not think that everybody else is to bow to your judgment. Bow before the Lord, and let your judgment be more eager to obey the truth for itself than to rule over others.

XLV.

Job xxxviii. 25–27.—"Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?"

God challengeth man to compare with his Maker even in the one matter of the rain. Can he create it? Can he send a shower upon the desert, to water the lone herbs which else would perish in the burning heat? No, he would not even think of doing such a thing. That generous act cometh of the Lord alone.

We shall work out a parallel between grace and rain.

I. GOD ALONE GIVETH RAIN, AND THE SAME IS TRUE OF GRACE.

We say of rain and of grace, God is the sole Author of it.

He devised and prepared the channel by which it comes to earth. He hath "divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters." The Lord makes a way for grace to reach his people.

He directs each drop, and gives each blade of grass its own drop of dew—to every believer his portion of grace.

He moderates the force, so that it does not beat down

or drown the tender herb. Grace comes in its own gentle way. Conviction, enlightenment, etc., are sent in due measure.

He holds it in his power. Absolutely at his own will does God bestow either rain for the earth or grace for the soul.

II. RAIN FALLS IRRESPECTIVE OF MEN, AND SO DOES GRACE.

Grace waits not man's observation. As the rain falls where no man is, so grace courts not publicity.

Nor his co-operation. It "tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." Micah v. 7.

Nor his prayers. Grass calls not for rain, yet it comes. "I am found of them that sought me not." Is. lxv. 1.

Nor his merits. Rain falls on the waste ground.

"Ah, grace, into unlikeliest hearts,
It is thy wont to come;
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home."

III. RAIN FALLS WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST HAVE EXPECTED IT.

It falls where there is no trace of former showers, even upon the desolate wilderness; so does grace enter hearts which had hitherto been unblessed, where great need was the only plea which rose to heaven. Is. xxxv. 7.

It falls where there seems nothing to repay the boon. Many hearts are naturally as barren as the desert. Is. xxxv. 6.

It falls where the need seems insatiable; "to satisfy the desolate." Some cases seem to demand an ocean of grace; but the Lord meets the need, and his grace falls where the joy and glory are all directed to God by grateful hearts. Twice we are told that the rain falls "where no man is." When conversion

is wrought of the Lord no man is seen ; the Lord alone is exalted.

IV. This rain is most valued by life.

The rain gives joy to seeds and plants in which there is life. Budding life knows of it ; the tenderest herb rejoices in it ; so is it with those who begin to repent, who feebly believe, and thus are just alive.

The rain causes development. Grace also perfects grace. Buds of hope grow into strong faith. Buds of feeling expand into love. Buds of desire rise to resolve. Buds of confession come to open avowal. Buds of usefulness swell into fruit.

The rain causes health and vigor of life. Is it not so with grace ?

The rain creates the flower with its color and perfume, and God is pleased. The full outgrowth of renewed nature cometh of grace, and the Lord is well pleased therewith.

Let us acknowledge the sovereignty of God as to grace.

Let us cry to him for grace.

Let us expect him to send it, though we may feel sadly barren, and quite out of the way of the usual means of grace.

To Interest the Hearer.

A lady travelling in Palestine writes : " Rain began to fall in torrents. Mohammed, our groom, threw a large Arab cloak over me, saying, ' May Allah preserve you, O lady ! while he is blessing the fields.' "

Oh, how pleasant are the effects of rain to languishing plants, to make them green and beautiful, lively and strong, fragrant and delightful ! So the effects of Christ's influences are most desirable to drooping souls, for enlightening and enlivening them, for confirming and strengthening them, for

comforting and enlarging them, for appetizing and satisfying them, transforming and beautifying them.—*John Willison.*

Be not to me as a cloud without rain, lest I be to thee like a tree without fruit.—*Spurstowe.*

My stock lies dead, and no increase
Doth my dull husbandry improve;
O let thy graces without cease
Drop from above!

* * * * * * *

The dew doth every morning fall;
And shall the dew outstrip thy Dove?
The dew, for which grass cannot call,
Drop from above!

—*George Herbert.*

The grass springs up; the bud opens; the leaf expands; the flowers breathe forth their fragrance as if they were under the most careful cultivation. All this must be the work of God, since it cannot even be pretended that *man* is there to produce these effects. Perhaps one would be more deeply impressed with a sense of the presence of God in the pathless desert or on the boundless prairie, where no man is, than in the most splendid park or the most tastefully cultivated garden which man could make. In the one case, the hand of God alone is seen; in the other, we are constantly admiring the skill of man.—*Barnes.*

The careful providence of God extends itself to all places, even to places uninhabited. This consideration may strengthen our dependence on God; though we are brought into a wilderness condition, where there is no man to pity us or give us a morsel of bread. Surely the Lord that feeds the wild beasts where there is no man can and will provide for his own people, when the hearts of all men are shut up against them; he can make the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth to bring them food, as the ravens did to Elijah.—*Caryl.*

This should tend to humble human pride : humanity is not the only creature that God careth for. Man is not the centre and pivot of the world. God cares for oxen, birds, insects, and everything that lives. He works the mystic machinery of heaven to water meadows untrodden of the foot of man. No flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness ; for God sees it, and that is enough. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and man is but one servitor out of the many which are created for God's pleasure. Let him take his place as one among many servants, and no longer dream that all things are made for him, and that they are wasted if he does not derive some benefit from them.

XLVI.

Psalm ix. 18.—"For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."

The practical value of a text very much depends upon the man to whom it comes. The song of the troubadour was charming to Richard Cœur de Lion because he knew the responsive verses. The trail is full of meaning to the Indian, for his quick eye knows how to follow it; it would not mean a tithe as much to a white man. The sight of the lighthouse is cheering to the mariner, for from it he gathers his whereabouts. So will those who are spiritually poor and needy eagerly lay hold on this promise, prize it, and live upon it with content.

It is literally true that the needy are remembered of God; and though they may be overlooked by man's laws, the Lord will rectify that error at the last. In better times also he will so order governments that they shall look with peculiar interest upon the poor. Using the text spiritually we see:

I. Two bitter experiences ended.

1. "The needy shall not alway be forgotten." You have been forgotten:
   By former friends and admirers.
   In arrangements made and plans projected.
   In judgments formed and in praises distributed.
   In help estimated and reliance expressed.

In fact, you have not been a factor in the calculation; you have been forgotten as a dead man out of mind.

This has wounded you deeply, for there was a time when you were consulted among the first.

This will not be so always.

2. "The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."

You have been disappointed :

In your natural expectation from justice, gratitude, relationship, age, sympathy, charity, etc.

In your confidence in man.

In your judgment of yourself.

In your expectations of providence.

This disappointment shall only be temporary. Your expectation shall not perish forever ; you shall yet receive more than you expected.

II. TWO SAD FEARS REMOVED. FEARS WHICH ARE NATURALLY SUGGESTED BY WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED.

1. Not forever shall you be forgotten :

You shall not meet with final forgetfulness.

In the day of severe trouble.

In the night of grief and alarm for sin.

In the hour of death.

2. Nor shall your expectation perish :

Your weakness shall not frustrate the power of God.

Your sin shall not dry up the grace of God.

Your constitutional infirmities shall not cause your overthrow.

Your future trials shall not be too much for you.

III. TWO SWEET PROMISES GIVEN.

1 "Not alway be forgotten ;" you shall not be overlooked :

In the arrangements of providence.

At the mercy-seat, when you are pleading.

From the pulpit, and in the Word, when your soul is hungering.

At the Breaking of Bread, when you long for communion with your Lord.

In your sufferings and service, when to be thought of by the Lord will be your main consolation.
By the angels, or by any other spiritual agencies.
By the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost.

2. "Expectation shall not perish forever." You shall not be disappointed:
Peace shall visit your heart.
Sin shall be vanquished without and within.
Mercy shall deliver in trial and out of trial.
Assurance shall be gained, and all its strong confidence.
Eminent joys shall be obtained, and an abundant entrance into glory.
Let the poor man hope in God.
Let him feast on the future if he find the present to be scant.
Above all, let him rest in the promise of a faithful God.

ILLUMINATORS.

The pain of being forgotten is forcibly expressed in the words ascribed by Cowper to Alexander Selkirk in his solitude:

"My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see."

An aged Christian, lying on his death-bed in a state of such extreme weakness that he was often entirely unconscious of all around him, was asked the cause of his perfect peace. He replied, "When I am able to think, I think of Jesus; and when I am unable to think of him, I know he is thinking of me."

Thirty years ago, before the Lord caused me to wander from my father's house and from my native place, I put my mark upon this passage in Isaiah: "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord," etc. (chap. xlix. 23). Of the many books I now pos-

sess, the Bible that bears this mark is the only one that belonged to me at that time. It now lies before me, and I find that, although the hair which then was dark as night has meanwhile become as sable silvered, the ink which marked this text has grown into intensity of blackness as the time advanced, corresponding with, and in fact recording, the growing intensity of the conviction that "they shall not be ashamed" who wait for thee. I believed it then, but I know it now, and I can write "Probatum est" with my whole heart over against the symbol which that mark is to me of my ancient faith. . . . Under many perilous circumstances, in many most trying scenes, amid faintings within and fears without, and under tortures that rend the heart, and troubles that crush it down, I have waited for thee, and lo! I stand this day as one not ashamed.—*Dr. John Kitto.*

In choosing a minister, and in all other church acts, let us be sure to remember the poor of the flock; they should, in fact, have double consideration, for the Lord would not have them to be overlooked. Do not let them suppose that they are forgotten.

Let us beware of disappointing a needy person. He sets great store by a promise when he greatly needs the help, and if it does not come in due time it causes him sharp distress. Let us never disappoint one of the Lord's poor, for the Lord will never do so himself.

What recompenses there will be in the eternal state, and what changes of position! Reputations will have a resurrection as well as bodies. Dishonor and neglect shall be rewarded with glory and honor. Disappointment through unjust withholding shall be doubly repaid by surprises of unlooked-for happiness. The wheel will turn, and that part of it which touched the dust shall mount aloft. Those words, "not alway," are a wonderful abatement to present ingratitude; and those, "not forever," are an equal *solatium* under this life's trials.

XLVII.

Psalm xix. 7.—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

Trees are known by their fruit, and books by their effect upon the mind. It is not the elegance of its diction but the excellence of its influence by which a book is to be estimated.

By "the law of the Lord" David means the whole revelation of God, as far as it had been given in his day; but his remark is equally true of all that God has since been pleased to speak by his Spirit.

This holy law may be judged of by its effect upon our own selves. It touches man's very soul, with the best conceivable result; and hence the Psalmist speaks of it in the most eulogistic manner as both perfect and sure. Its effects prove it to be complete and certain.

I. The work of the Word of God in conversion.

Not apart from the Spirit, but as it is used by the Spirit for divers ends, all needful to salvation.

1. To convince men of sin; they see what perfection is, that God demands it, and that they are far from it.
2. To drive men from false methods of seeking salvation, to bring them to self-despair, and to shut them up to God's method of saving them.
3. To reveal the way of salvation, by grace, through Christ, by faith.
4. To enable the soul to embrace Christ as its all in all. By setting forth promises and invitations, which are

opened up to the understanding and sealed to the heart, etc.

5. To bring the heart nearer and nearer to God. Emotions of love, desires for holiness, devotion, self-searching, love to men, humility, etc.—these are all excited, sustained, and perfected in the heart by the Word of God.
6. To restore the soul when it has wandered. Renewing tenderness, hope, love, joy, etc., by its gentle reminders.
7. To perfect the nature. The highest flights of holy enjoyment are not above or beyond the Word. Nothing is purer or more elevated than Holy Scripture. The Word also slays all sin, promotes every virtue, prepares for every duty, etc.

II. The excellence of this work done by the Word.

The operations of grace by the Word are altogether good and not evil; and they are timed and balanced with infinite discretion. The Word of the Lord works marvellously, perfectly, and surely.

1. It removes despair without quenching repentance.
2. Gives pardon, but does not create presumption.
3. Gives rest, but excites the soul to progress.
4. Breathes security, but engenders watchfulness.
5. Bestows strength and holiness, but begets no boasting.
6. Gives harmony to duties, emotions, hopes, and enjoyments.
7. Brings the man to live for God, before God, and with God; and yet makes him none the less fitted for the daily duties of life.

III. The consequent excellence of the Word.

1. We need not add to it if we would secure conversion in any special case, or on the largest scale.

2. We need not keep back any doctrine for fear of damping the flame of a true revival.
3. We need not extraordinary gifts with which to preach it; the Word will do its own work.
4. We have but to follow the Word to be converted. It would be useless to run after new doctrine in the hope of being more powerfully affected. The old is better, and nothing better than the old gospel can be imagined. It fits a man's needs as a key fits a lock.
5. We have but to keep to it to become truly wise—wise as the aged, wise as necessity requires, wise as the age, wise as eternity demands, wise with the wisdom of Christ.

Cling to the Scripture.
Study the whole revelation of God.
Use it as your chief instrument in all holy service.

"MODERN INSTANCES."

A remarkable proof that the Bible is its own witness is given by a writer from Oporto, who records the following reply of a man he met crouching in a ditch, to an inquiry as to what book he was reading: "Well, if you won't betray me, I acknowledge that this is a New Testament. I bought it of a man who was selling such books, and determined to know something of its contents. I dare not tell anybody that I have it, not even my wife. So I have no one to teach me. Yet it is not difficult to understand, for as I read *it makes itself plain to me.*"

"The process of enlightenment in many Romanist minds," says an observer, "is shadowed forth by the experience of one whom I saw but last week. He sat down to read the Bible an hour each evening with his wife. In a few evenings he stopped in the midst of his reading, and said, '*Wife, if this book is true, we are wrong.*' He read on, and in a few days longer, said, '*Wife, if this book is true, we are lost.*' Riveted

to the book, and deeply anxious, he still read, and in a week more joyfully exclaimed, '*Wife, if this book is true, we may be saved.*' A few weeks more reading, and taught by the Spirit of God through the exhortations and instructions of a city missionary, they both placed their faith in Christ, and are now rejoicing in hope."—*Christian Treasury.*

I have many books that I cannot sit down to read; they are, indeed, good and sound, but, like halfpence, there goes a great quantity to a small amount; there are silver books, and a very few golden books; but I have one book worth them all, called the Bible.—*John Newton.*

It is the Book of God. What if I should
Say, God of Books?
Let him that looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold,
His thoughts in silence smother
Till he find such another.
—*Christopher Harvey.*

The longer I live the higher is my estimate of an expository ministry, embracing the whole Word of God. I have on purpose tried certain truths to see if they will produce conversion, and I have not failed in any case. Outlying doctrines meet with certain outlying minds which could not be reached by the usual range of teaching. What would seem to be the eccentricities of truth are all needed for impressing eccentric conditions of thought and heart. I prayerfully preached the resurrection and many were raised to spiritual life; I preached divine sovereignty when a revival was in full swing and it deepened and continued the work. The omission of certain truths from certain ministries may account for their barrenness. Oh, that ministers would believe that the Word needs no improving, but is already perfect, "converting the soul;" and that it requires no suiting to the times, for it still makes wise the simple.

If there is any knowledge fully in our possession, it is certainly that which comes to us by experience. That a certain

material will float in the water may be proved by a knowledge of its specific gravity; but we will feel more fully assured of the fact if we have seen it tried, and we will regard our answer to an objector, "I have seen it floating in water frequently," as simply sufficient to silence all objections. Ay, we will regard such a statement as fully more conclusive than "It must float, for its specific gravity is lighter than water." On this same principle—and it is the principle of common-sense—how fully we can prove that the Bible is the Word of God! Yes, every Christian carries the proof with him in his own experience. A poor Italian woman, a fruit-seller, had received the Word of God in her heart, and became persuaded of the truth of it. Seated at her modest stall at the head of a bridge, she made use of every moment in which she was unoccupied in her small traffic, in order to study the sacred volume. "What are you reading there, my good woman?" said a gentleman, one day, as he came up to the stall to purchase some fruit. "It is the Word of God," replied the fruit-vender. "The Word of God! Who told you that?" "He told me so himself." "Have you ever spoken with him, then?" The poor woman felt a little embarrassed, more especially as the gentleman insisted on her giving him some proof of what she believed. Unused to discussion, and feeling greatly at a loss for arguments, she at length exclaimed, looking upward, "Can you prove to me, sir, that there is a sun up in the sky?" "Prove it!" he replied, "why, the best proof is that it warms me, and that I can see its light." "So it is with me," she replied, joyously; "the proof of this Book's being the Word of God is that it warms and lights my soul."—*Bertram's "Homiletic Encyclopædia."*

McCheyne somewhere says, "Depend upon it it is God's word, not man's comment on God's word, which converts souls." I have frequently observed that this is the case. A discourse has been the means of conviction or of decision; but usually upon close inquiry I have found that the real instru-

ment was a scripture quoted by the preacher. A large fruit may contain and nourish a tiny seed ; when the fruit falls into the ground and the shoot springs up, the real life was in the central pip, and not in the juicy fruit which encompassed it. So the divine truth is the living and incorruptible seed ; the sermon is as needful as the apple to its pip ; but still the vitality, the energy, the saving power, was in the pip of the Word, and only in a minor sense in the surrounding apple of human exposition and exhortation.

XLVIII.

Psalm xxxvii. 39.—"But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."

Salvation is a very large term, and describes the whole life of true believers—their whole experience, from their first consciousness of the ruin of the fall to their entrance into glory. They feel their need of being perpetually saved from self, sin, Satan, and the world. They trust in God for preservation, and their end is peace (verse 37).

The prosperous sinner is on another tack, and comes to another conclusion; he disowns all need of salvation, and considers his success to be of his own winning. Alas! there comes to him a turning of the tables before long; according to the preceding verse, "The transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off." God is not with the unrighteous; they have neither safety, nor strength, nor salvation in their time of trouble.

Our text contains a broad statement, of which we may say:

I. This is the essence of sound doctrine.

The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, even of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost in:

1. The planning.
2. The providing.
3. The beginning.
4. The carrying on.
5. The completion.

II. This is a necessary fact. The saints recognize it; for

1. Their inward conflicts make them know that God alone

must work salvation. They are too fickle and feeble to save themselves.

2. Their outward temptations drive them to the same conclusion. They are well kept whom God keeps, but none else.
3. The world's hate drives them away from all hope in that quarter. God is greater than a world in arms.
4. Their daily trials and afflictions would crush them if Omnipotence did not sustain them. Only God's grace can be all-sufficient.
5. The perishing of hypocrites is a sad proof of how little man can do. Temporary believers perish like blossoms which never knit to fruit, and therefore fall from the tree.

III. THIS IS A SWEET CONSOLATION. This truth, that unto God the Lord belongeth the salvation of his saints, acts graciously:

1. Leading them to solid trust.
2. Exciting them to believing prayer.
3. Urging them to look out of self.
4. Inspiring them with great thoughts of God, and
5. Leading them to offer adoring praise unto their Redeemer.

IV. THIS IS A REASON FOR HUMILITY.

1. It strips the righteous of all pride in the fact of their being saved.
2. Of all exultation in self because they continue in their integrity.
3. Of all undue censure of the fallen; for they, themselves, would have failed had not the Lord upheld them.
4. Of all self-confidence as to the future, since their weakness is inherent and abiding.
5. Of all self-glorying, even in heaven, since in all things they are debtors to sovereign grace.

V. THIS IS A FRUITFUL GROUND OF HOPE.

1. In reference to our own difficulties ; God can give us deliverance.
2. In reference to our tried brethren ; the Lord can sustain, sanctify, and deliver them.
3. In reference to seeking souls ; we may leave their cases in the Saviour's hands. He is able to save to the uttermost.
4. In reference to sinners ; they cannot be too degraded, obstinate, ignorant, or false ; God can work salvation even in the worst.

GOLDEN BELLS.

"Salvation is of the Lord." This is the sum of Jonah's discourse ; one word for all ; the very moral of his history. The mariners might have written upon their ship, instead of Castor and Pollux, or the like device, *Salvation is the Lord's ;* the Ninevites in the next chapter might have written upon their gates, *Salvation is the Lord's ;* and all mankind, whose cause is pitted and pleaded by God against the hardness of Jonah's heart, might have written in the palms of their hands, *Salvation is the Lord's.* It is the argument of both the Testaments, the staff and support of heaven and earth. They would both sink, and all their joints be severed, if the salvation of the Lord were not. The birds in the air sing no other note, the beasts in the field give no other voice than Salus Jehovæ, *Salvation is the Lord's.* . . . And "what shall I more say ?" as the apostle asked (Heb. xi.) when he had spoken much, and there was much more behind, but time failed him. Rather, what should I not say ? for the world is my theatre at this time, and I neither think nor can feign to myself anything that hath not dependence upon this acclamation, *Salvation is the Lord's.*—*King on Jonah.*

Thus the saints hold heaven. Not by conquest, but by heritage. Won by another arm than their own, it presents the

strongest imaginable contrast to the spectacle in England's palace that day when the king demanded to know of his assembled nobles by what title they held their lands? What title! At the rash question a hundred swords leaped from their scabbards. Advancing on the alarmed monarch—"By these," they said, "we won, and by these will keep them." How different the scene which heaven presents! All eyes are turned on Jesus with looks of love; gratitude glows in every bosom, and swells every song; now with golden harps they sound his praise; and now, descending from their thrones to do him homage, they cast their crowns in one glittering heap at the feet which were nailed on Calvary. From this scene, learn in whose name to seek salvation, and through whose merits to hope for it; and with a faith in harmony with the worship of the skies, be this your language—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."—*Dr. Guthrie.*

"This brook will soon run dry," said one. "Nay," quoth his fellow, "it flows from a living spring, which was never known to fail in summer or in winter." A man was reputed to be very rich by those who saw his expensive houses, and horses, and charges; but there were others who judged that his name would soon be in the *Gazette*, for he had no capital. "There is nothing at the back of it," said one, and the saying meant much. Now, the believer has the eternal deep for his spring of supply, and the all-sufficiency of God as the substance of his wealth. What cause has he to fear?

If salvation were partly of God and partly of man it would be as sorry an affair as that image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which was part of iron and part of clay. It would end in a break-down. If our dependence were upon Jesus in a measure, and our own works in some degree, our foundation would be partly on the rock and partly on the sand, and the whole structure would fall. Oh, to know the full meaning of the words, "*Salvation is of the Lord*"!

Experience alone can beat this truth into men's minds. A

man will lie broken at the foot of the precipice, every bone dislocated by the fall, and yet hope to save himself. Piles of sin will fall upon him and bury him, and yet his self-trust will live. Mountains of actual transgression will overwhelm him, and yet he will stir himself to self-confident effort, working like the Cyclops which Etna heaped upon them. Crushed to atoms, every particle of our nature reeks with conceit. Ground to powder, our very dust is pungent with pride. Only the Holy Ghost can make a man receive that humbling sentence, "*Salvation is of the Lord.*"

XLIX.

Psalm lxxxiv. 3.—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God."

David, as an exile, envied the birds which dwelt around the house of the Lord. So the Christian, when debarred the assembly of the saints, or under spiritual desertion, will pine to be once more at home with God.

These birds found in the sanctuary what we would find in God.

I. Houses for themselves.

That they should find houses in and around the Lord's house is remarkable, and David dwelt on it with pleasure.

1. Consider what they were. Sparrows.
   Worthless creatures. Five for two farthings.
   Needy creatures, requiring both nests, food, and everything else.
   Uninvited guests. The temple did not need them, it might have been all the better without them.
   Numerous creatures; but none were driven away.
2. Consider what they did. "Found a house"—a comfortable, suitable, permanent abode.
   They looked for it, or they could not have been described as having found it.
   It was there already, or they could not have found it.
   They appropriated it. Their right lay in discovery;

they found a house and occupied it without question. Oh, for an appropriating faith!

3. Consider what they enjoyed?

Safety.
Rest.
Abode.
Delight.
Society.
Nearness.

All this in the house of God, hard by his altars. Thus do believers find all *in Christ Jesus*.

And so, secondarily, they find the same things *in the assembly of the saints*, in the place where God's honor dwelleth.

We come to the house of the Lord with joy.
We remain in it with delight.
We sit and sing in it with pleasure.
We commune with our fellow-songsters with much content.

It is not every bird that does this. The eagle is too ambitious. The vulture too foul. The cormorant too greedy. The hawk too warlike. The ostrich too wild. The barn-door fowl too dependent upon man. The owl too fond of darkness.

These sparrows were little and loving.

II. NESTS FOR THEIR YOUNG.

Some persons are not so much in need of a house for themselves; for, like swallows, they live on the wing, and are active and energetic; but they need a nest for their young, for whom they are greatly anxious. They long to see the young people settled, happy, and safe in God.

Children should be housed in the house of God. The sanctuary of God should be the nursery of the young.

1. They will be safe there, and free there. The swallow, the "bird of liberty," is satisfied to find a nest for herself near the altars of God. She is not afraid of bondage there either for herself or her young.
2. They will be joyful there. We should try to make our little ones happy in God, and in his holy worship.

Dull Sabbaths and dreary services should not be mentioned among us.

3. They are near the blessing, when we bring them near the house of the Lord.
4. They are in choice society; their companions will be the companions of Jesus.
5. They are likely to return to the nest, as the swallows do; even as the young salmon return to the rivulet where they were hatched. Young folks remember their first impressions.
6. Children truly brought to Christ have every blessing in that fact.

They are rich; they dwell in God's palace.

They are educated; they abide in the Lord's temple.

They are safe for time and eternity.

The second blessing of a nest for our young often follows on the first, or getting a house for ourselves.

But it needs prayer, example, and precept. Children do not take to religion as ducks to water; they must be led and trained with earnest care.

Are you sighing after Christ for yourself and your children?

Are you content without Christ? Then you are not likely to care about your children.

Do you already possess a home in Jesus? Rest not till all yours are housed in the same place.

Fragments.

Sir Thomas More used to attend the parish church at Chelsea, and there, putting on a surplice, he would sing with the choristers at matins and high mass. It happened, one day, that the Duke of Norfolk coming to Chelsea to dine with him, found him at church thus engaged. As they walked home together arm in arm, after service, the duke exclaimed, "My Lord Chancellor a parish clerk! A parish clerk! you dis-

honor the king and his office!" "Nay," he replied, smiling, "your Grace cannot suppose that the king, our master, will be offended with me for serving his Master, or thereby account his office dishonored."

"I'm only a little sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life is of little value,
But the dear Lord cares for me."

Tennyson plaintively refers to the song of the linnets:

"I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:
And one is glad—her note is gay—
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad—her note is changed—
Because her brood is stolen away."

The feeling of the linnets may serve as an analogue. Christian parents have a gay note when their little ones have ranged at their sweet will in the paths of duty; but their note must be one of sadness when the brood is stolen away from truth and righteousness.—*W. Norris.*

"God fails not," as one has beautifully said, "to find a house for the most *worthless*, and the nest for the most *restless* of birds." What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all his creatures! We know what the expression or "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide one's self in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in"?—*Things New and Old.*

A custom, existing among several nations of antiquity, is deemed capable of illustrating the present passage. For birds whose nests chanced to be built on the temples, or within the limits of them, were not allowed to be driven away, much less

to be killed, but found there a secure and undisturbed abode. —*W. K. Clay.*

As a rule, the children of godly parents are godly. In cases where this is not the case there is a reason. I have carefully observed and detected the absence of family prayer, gross inconsistency, harshness, indulgence, or neglect of admonition. If trained in God's ways, they do not depart from them.

L.

Psalm xci. 11.—"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

The Lord gave his people shelter in the time of pestilence, for he had promised, "There shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." The former verses celebrate the Passover of those who dwell in God.

After the Passover came a journey to Canaan; and the promise of the covenant angel and his keeping them in all their ways fitly follow upon the rescue from the plague.

We, too, are pilgrims on our way to Canaan. He who set us free by the Passover deliverance also provides for our journey to the land which floweth with milk and honey. All the way to the promised land is covered by this divine safe-conduct.

I. THERE ARE WAYS WHICH ARE NOT IN THE PROMISE.

"All thy ways" are mentioned; but some tracks are not to be followed by children of God, and are not their ways.

1. Ways of presumption. In these men court danger, and, as it were, defy God. "Cast thyself down," said Satan to our Lord, and then urged this promise. Matt. iv. 6.
2. Ways of sin, dishonesty, lying, vice, worldly conformity, etc. We have no permit to bow in the house of Rimmon. Eph. v. 12.
3. Ways of worldliness, selfishness, greed, ambition. The ways by which men seek personal aggrandizement are

usually dark and crooked, and are not of God. Prov. xxviii. 22 ; 1 Tim. vi. 9.

4. Ways of pride, self-conceit, boastful promisings, pretended perfection, etc. "Pride goeth before destruction."
5. Ways of will worship, wilfulness, obstinacy, fancy, day-dreaming, absurd impulse, etc. Jer. ii. 18.
6. Ways of erroneous doctrine, novel practice, fashionable ceremonial, flattering delusion, etc. 2 Tim. iii. 5.

II. THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH SAFETY IS GUARANTEED.

1. The way of humble faith in the Lord Jesus.
2. The way of obedience to divine precepts.
3. The way of childlike trust in providential guidance.
4. The way of strict principle and stern integrity.
5. The way of consecrated service and seeking God's glory.
6. The way of holy separation and walking with God.

III. THESE WAYS LEAD US INTO VARIED CONDITIONS.

1. They are changeful and varied ; "all thy ways."
2. They are sometimes stony with difficulty ; "foot against a stone."
3. They may be terrible with temptation.
4. They may be mysteriously trying. Devils may throng the path—only to be met by holy angels.
5. They are essentially safe, while the smooth and easy roads are perilous.

IV. BUT WHILE WALKING IN THEM ALL BELIEVERS ARE SECURE.

1. The Lord himself concerns himself about them. "*He* shall give his angels charge over thee." He will personally command those holy beings to have an eye to his children. David charged his troops to spare Absalom, but his bidding was disregarded. It is not so with God.
2. Mysterious agencies protect them ; angels bear them up

in their hands, as nurses carry little children. Wonderful tenderness and power! Angels acting as servants to men!

3. All things are on their side, both visible and invisible. Command is laid on all to protect the saints. "Thou hast given commandment to save me." Ps. lxxi. 3.
4. Each one is personally watched over. "Charge over *thee* to keep *thee*." Is. xlii. 6; Gen. xxviii. 15.
5. That watchfulness is perpetual—"All thy ways." Ps. cxxi. 3, 4.
6. This guard also confers honor. How noble a thing to have the courtiers of heaven for a *corps de garde!*
7. All this comes to them by Jesus, whose the angels are, and whom they serve. Is. xliii. 4.

See how the lowest employment is consistent with the highest enjoyment—keeping guard over the Lord's stumbling children is no discredit to angels.

How cheerfully we should watch over others! How vigorously should we hold them up whenever it is in our power! To cast off a stumbling brother is not angelic, but the reverse.

How safe we ought to feel, how fully trustful we ought to be! Alexander slept soundly, "for," said he, "Parmenio wakes."

How holy we should be with such holy ones for watchers! Great privileges involve heavy responsibilities.

Garnishing.

While King William, at a battle in Flanders, was giving orders in the thickest of the fight, he saw, to his surprise, among his staff one Michael Godfrey, a merchant of London, and Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, who had thus exposed himself in order to gratify his curiosity. The king, riding up to him, said, "Sir, you ought not to run these hazards; you are not a soldier, you can be of no use here."

"Sire," answered Godfrey, "I run no more hazard than your Majesty." "Not so," said William; "I am here where it is my duty to be, and I may, without presumption, commit my life to God's keeping; but you——" The sentence needed no completion, for at that very moment a cannon ball laid Godfrey lifeless at the king's feet. He had been wise had he restricted himself to the ways of his calling and duty.

Old Humphrey has a good paper against wandering from the path of duty, suggested by a notice at the entrance of a park: "Take notice. In walking through these grounds, you are requested to keep the foot-path." Bunyan has supplied the same theme for solemn warning in the pilgrim straying into *By-path meadow.—Bowes.*

Angels our servants are,
  And keep in all our ways;
And in their watchful hands they bear
  The sacred sons of grace;
Unto that heavenly bliss
  They all our steps attend;
And God himself our Father is,
  And Jesus is our Friend.

—*Wesley.*

A dying saint asked that his name should be put upon his tombstone, with the dates of his birth and death, and the one word, "*Kept.*"

Our protection is in other hands than our own. In the way of duty we are as safe as in heaven. Not alone in great dangers, but in little ones we are secure if we are in the right way —for we are kept from stumbling-stones as well as from fiery darts. Our guards are such as no enemy can resist, for they are strong; such as no evil can escape, for they are swift; such as no weariness can tire, for they are never weary. We have a bodyguard of immortals, each one of them invincible, unflagging, loyal, loving, and full of fire. Each angel may truly say,

"A charge to keep I have."

Keep it he will till the Lord himself shall receive our spirit. No angel will give in his account with sorrow, saying, "I could not keep him; the stones were too many, his feet too feeble, the way too long." No, we shall be kept to the end; for in addition to angels, we have the safeguard of their Lord; HE keepeth the feet of his saints. 1 Sam. ii. 9.

LI.

Psalm cxv. 17, 18.—"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord."

The living God should be adored by a living people. A blessing God should be blessed by a blessing people. Whatever others do, we ought to bless Jehovah. When we bless him we should not rest till others do the same; we should cry to them, "Praise the Lord." Our example and our persuasion should rouse them to praise.

I. A MOURNFUL MEMORY. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." This reminds us:

1. Of silenced voices in the choirs of Zion. Good men and true who neither sing nor speak among us any longer.
2. Of our own speedy silence; so far as this world is concerned we shall soon be among the dead and silent ones.
3. Of the ungodly around us, who are already spiritually dead, and can no more praise the Lord than if they were dumb.
4. Of lost souls in hell. Never will these bless the Lord.

II. A HAPPY RESOLUTION. "But we will bless the Lord."

In heart, song, testimony, action, we are resolved to give the Lord our loving praise; because:

1. We live. Shall we not bless him who keeps us in being?

2. We live spiritually, and this demands perpetual thanksgiving.
3. We are blessed of the Lord; shall we not bless him?
4. He will bless us. More and more will he reveal his love to us; let us praise him more and more. Be this our steadfast vow, that we will bless the Lord, come what may.

III. An appropriate commencement. "We will bless the Lord from this time forth."

1. When the heathen ask, "Where is now their God?" (verse 2). Let us reply courageously to all atheistic questions, and meet infidelity with joyous adoration.
2. When under a sense of mercy, we are led to sing, "The Lord hath been mindful of us" (verse 12), let us then bless him.
3. When spiritually renewed and comforted. When the four times repeated words, "He will bless," have come true in our experience, and the Lord has increased us with every personal and family blessing (verses 12–14), then let all that is within us bless the holy name of the Lord.
4. When led to confess Christ. Then should we begin the never-ending life-psalm. Service and song should go together.
5. When years end and begin—New-Years' days, birthdays, etc., let us bless God for
   Sin of the year forgiven.
   Need of the year supplied.
   Mercy of the year enjoyed.
   Fears of the year removed.
   Hopes of the year fulfilled.

Let us from this very moment magnify the name of the Lord. Let our hearts turn each beat into music as we inwardly bless him. We have robbed him of his glory long enough.

IV. An everlasting continuance; "from this time forth and for evermore."

1. Weariness shall not suspend it. We will renew our strength as we bless the Lord.
2. Final falling shall not end it; the Lord will keep our soul in his way, and make us praise him all our days.
3. Nor shall death so much as interrupt our songs, but raise them to a purer and fuller strain.
4. Nor shall any supposable calamity deprive the Lord of our gratitude. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21.

One by one the singers in the consecrated choir steal away from us, and we miss their music; let us feel as if baptized for the dead.

Will no one here engage in the choir, and rehearse on earth the sonnets of heaven?

Joy-Notes.

Praise is the highest function that any creature can discharge. The rabbis have a beautiful bit of teaching buried among their rubbish about angels. They say that there are two kinds of angels, the angels of service and the angels of praise, of which two orders the latter is the higher, and that no angel in it praises God twice; but having lifted up his voice in the psalm of heaven, then ceases to be. He has perfected his being, he has reached the height of his greatness, he has done what he was made for; let him fade away. The garb of legend is mean enough, but the thought it embodies is that ever true and solemn one, without which life is naught: "Man's chief end is to glorify God."—*Dr. Maclaren.*

There is no heaven, either in this world or in the world to come, for people who do not praise God. If you do not enter into the spirit and worship of heaven, how should the spirit and

joy of heaven enter into you? Selfishness makes long prayers, but love makes short prayers, that it may continue longer in praise.—*Pulsford.*

King of glory, King of peace,
I will love thee:
And that love may never cease,
I will move thee.
* * * * * *
Seven whole days, not one in seven,
I will praise thee.
In my heart, though not in heaven,
I can raise thee.
* * * * * *
Small it is, in this poor sort
To enrol thee;
Even eternity is too short
To extol thee.

—*George Herbert.*

On Thursday evening, March 29th, 1883, for above an hour all who had occasion to use the telephone in Chicago found it vibrating to musical tones. Private and public telephones, and even the police and fire-alarm instruments, were alike affected. The source of the music was a mystery until the following day, when it was learned that a telegraph wire, which passes near most of the telephone wires, was connected with the harmonic system, that tunes were being played over it, and that the telephone wires took up the sounds by induction. If one wire carrying sweet sounds from place to place could so affect another wire by simply being near to it, how ought Christians, in communication with their Father in heaven, to affect all with whom they come in contact in the world! The divine music of love and gentleness in their lives should be a blessing to society.—*The Pulpit Treasury, New York.*

When we bless God for mercies we prolong them, and when we bless him for miseries we usually end them. When we reach to praise we have compassed the design of a dispensa-

tion, and have reaped the harvest of it. Praise is a soul in flower, and a secret, hearty blessing of the Lord is the soul fruit-bearing. Praise is the honey of life, which a devout heart sucks from every bloom of providence and grace. As well be dead as be without praise; it is the crown of life.

LII.

Psalm cxix. 50.—"This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."

In some respects the same event happens to us all; to good men, to great men, to well-instructed men, as well as to the wicked, the obscure, and the ignorant. Each of these can speak of "my affliction." "The heart knoweth his own bitterness." Prov. xiv. 10.

It is a grand matter when "my affliction" is in each case balanced by "my comfort." It was so in David's case, and he is a fair representative of all believers. How is it with each one of our hearers?

I. BELIEVERS HAVE THEIR PECULIAR COMFORT. Each tried child of God can say, "This is my comfort."

1. *This*, as different from others. Worldly men get their drops of comfort from such sources as they prefer; but the godly man looks to his experience of the Word, and says, "This is my comfort." Ps. iv. 6.
2. *This*, as understanding what it is. He knew his consolation as well as he knew his tribulation. He was not like Hagar, who could not see the well which was so near her. Gen. xxi. 19.
3. *This*, as having it near at hand. He does not say *that*, as if he pointed it out in the distance; but *this*, as grasping it.
4. *This*, as pleading in prayer that which he had enjoyed; urging upon the Lord the mercy already received.

II. THAT COMFORT COMES FROM A PECULIAR SOURCE. "Thy word hath quickened me."

1. In part it is outward.
   The word of God, full of promises, is our comfort. Rom. xv. 4.
   The word of God, full of records of his goodness, is the confirmation of our confidence. Ps. lxxvii. 5–10.
   The word of God, full of power, is our strength. Eccles. viii. 4.
2. In part it is inward. "Thy word hath quickened me."
   In past experience he had felt the power of the word in raising him:
   Into life from death. Ps. cxvi. 8.
   Into energy from lethargy. Cant. vi. 12.
   Into higher life from lower. Ps. cxix. 67.
   In all things it had been a source of quickening to him.
   In present experience he was then feeling its power in making
   His mind less worldly.
   His heart more prayerful.
   His spirit more tender.
   His faith more simple.

If the word has done and is doing all this, we may expect it to do more, and to magnify its power in our complete rescue.

III. THAT COMFORT IS VALUABLE UNDER PECULIAR TRIALS.

1. Hope deferred. Study the context. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope" (verse 49). Quickening enables us to hope on.
2. Trial endured (verse 50). Comfort is most needed in trouble, and there is no comfort like quickening.
3. Scorn suffered. "The proud have had me greatly in derision" (verse 51). We care nothing for mockers when we are lively in spiritual things.

4. Sin of others. "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked" (verse 53). More grace will enable us to bear up under abounding sin.
5. Changes. Read carefully verse 54. The Bible has a song for all seasons and a psalm for all places.
6. Darkness; "in the night" (verse 55). There is no night-light like the Word, enlightening and enlivening the heart.

IV. THAT THE FORM OF OUR COMFORT IS A TEST OF CHARACTER.

1. Some look to wealth; when their corn and their wine are increased, they say, "This is my comfort." They mind the main chance; they are worldly. Luke xii. 19.
2. Some seek to dreams and visions, omens and fancies, impressions and presentiments; they are superstitious.
3. Some run to sin, drink, gaming, worldly company, dissipation, opium; they are wicked.
4. Some resort to their fellow-men for advice and assistance; they are unwise, and will be disappointed. Jer. xvii. 5.

What is your comfort?
Has this blessed volume quickened you?
If so, look to it under all trials, for it will never fail you.

The Rev. E. Paxton Hood says: "When I visited one day, as he was dying, my beloved friend Benjamin Parsons, I said, 'How are you to-day, sir?' He said, 'My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows—infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom.' Preaching in the Canterbury Hall in Brighton, I mentioned this some time since; and, not many months after, I was requested to call upon a poor but holy young woman, apparently dying. She said, 'I felt I must see you before I died. I heard you tell the story of Benjamin

Parsons and his three pillows; and when I went through a surgical operation, and it was very cruel, I was leaning my head on pillows, and as they were taking them away, I said, "Mayn't I keep them?" The surgeon said, "No, my dear, we must take them away." "But," said I, "you can't take away Benjamin Parsons's three pillows; I can lay my head on infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom." ' "

"*My word*"—"The best relief that mourners have,
It makes our sorrows blest;
Our fairest hope beyond the grave,
And our eternal rest."

"Speak to me now in Scripture language alone," said a dying Christian. "I can trust the words of God; but when they are the words of man, it costs me an effort to think whether I may trust to them."

I would, when dying comforts fly,
As much as when they present were,
Upon my living joy rely;
Help, Lord, for here I daily err.
—*Ralph Erskine.*

I was questioning my spiritual life, I who have so long been a preacher to others. I entered a little rustic assembly. An unlettered man preached the gospel; he preached it heartily; my tears began to flow; my soul leaped at the very sound of the Word of the Lord. What a comfort it was to me! How frequently have I thought of it since! The Word did revive me; my heart was not dead to its influence; I was one of those happy people who know the joyful sound. Assurance was bright in my soul—the Word had quickened me.

What energy a text will breathe into a man! There is more in one divine sentence than in huge folios of human composition. There are tinctures of which one drop is more powerful than large doses of the common dilutions. The Bible is the essence of truth; it is the mind of God, the wisdom of the Eternal. By every word of God men are made to live, and are kept in life.

LIII.

Psalm cxxxviii. 1–3.—"I will praise Thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee. I will worship towards Thy holy temple, and praise Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and for Thy truth: for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name. In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

David was vexed with rival gods, as we are with rival gospels. Nothing is more trying to the soul of a true man than to be surrounded with vile counterfeits, and to hear these cried up, and the truth treated with contempt.

How will David act under the trial? For so should we act. Our text informs us. He will:

I. SING WITH WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE. "I will praise thee with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto thee."

1. His song would openly show his contempt of the false gods; he would sing whether they were there or no. They were such nothings that he would not change his note for them.
2. It would evince his strong faith in the true God. To the teeth of the adversary he glorified Jehovah. His enthusiastic whole-hearted song was better than denunciation or argument.
3. It would declare his joyful zeal for God; he sang to show

the strong emotion of his soul. Others might be pleased in Baal, he greatly rejoiced in Jehovah.

4. It would shield him from evil from those about him ; for holy song keeps off the enemy. Praise is a potent disinfectant. If called to behold evil, let us purify the air with the incense of praise.

II. WORSHIP BY THE DESPISED RULE. "I will worship toward thy holy temple."

1. Quietly ignoring all will-worship, he would follow the rule of the Lord, and the custom of the saints.
2. Looking to the person of Christ, which was typified by the temple. There is no singing like that which is directed toward the Lord Jesus, as now living to present it to the Father.
3. Trusting in the one finished Sacrifice, looking to the one Great Expiation, we shall praise aright.
4. Realizing God himself ; for it is to God he speaks— "toward thy holy temple." Music which is meant for the ear of God is music indeed.

III. PRAISE THE QUESTIONED ATTRIBUTES. "I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth."

1. Loving-kindness in its universality.
   Loving-kindness in its speciality.
   Grace in everything. Grace to me. Grace so much despised of Pharisees and Sadducees, but so precious to true penitents.
   Concerning the grace of God, let us cling close to the doctrine and spirit of the gospel all the more because the spirit of the age is opposed to them.
2. Truth. Historic accuracy of Scripture.
   Absolute certainty of the gospel.
   Assured truthfulness of the promises.
   Complete accuracy of prophecy.

It is ours in these evil days to hold to the infallible in-

spiration of the Word, and to affirm it in unmistakable terms. No wonder that men rush off to find an infallible church in Popery, or rely upon their own infallible reason, when once they doubt the plenary inspiration of the Bible.

IV. REVERENCE THE HONORED WORD. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

God has magnified his sure word of testimony beyond all such revelations as we receive through creation and providence, though these declare God's name. The gospel word is:

1. More clear. Words are better understood than nature's hieroglyphs.
2. More sure. The Spirit himself sealing it.
3. More sovereign. Effectually blessing believers.
4. More complete. The whole of God is seen in Christ.
5. More lasting. Creation must pass away, the Word endures forever.
6. More glorifying to God. Specially in the great atonement.

V. PROVE IT BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me," etc.

He had used his knowledge of God derived from the Word.

1. By offering prayer. "I cried." What do men know of the truth and grace of God and the virtue of his Word if they have never prayed?
2. By narrating the answer. "Thou answeredst me," etc. We are God's witnesses, and should with readiness, care, frequency, and courage testify what we have seen and known.
3. By exhibiting the strength of soul which was gained by prayer. This is good witness-bearing. Show by patience, courage, joy, and holiness what the Lord has done for your soul.

Our Lord is above all others.

Our joy in him surpasses all other joy.
Therefore will we delight in him and extol him beyond measure.

JOTTINGS.

Singing unto Jehovah before the gods was good for David's own soul. It is perilous to attempt a secret fidelity to God, it is so apt to degenerate into cowardice. A converted soldier tried at first to pray in bed, or in some secret corner, but he found it would not do; he must kneel down in the barrack-room before the others, and run the gauntlet of the men's remarks; for until he had done so he had not taken his stand and he felt no peace of mind. It is needful for our spiritual health that we come out distinctly upon the Lord's side.

The effect of whole-heartedness is very manifest. Even prejudiced persons put up with a great deal in a service when they see that those engaged in it are enthusiastic. "It was very singular," said one who attended a revival service, "and I should have laughed outright, only I saw the tears running down an old sailor's cheeks as he sung the hymn with all his might."

Observe carefully the little points in a divine command; worship "toward the holy temple." Nothing is little when God's will is concerned. I knew a youth who had wished to be baptized, but his friends kept him back. When he fell ill, he fretted because he had not confessed his Lord according to the Scripture. "But, Isaac," said his mother, "you know baptism will not save you." "No, mother," he replied, "of course it will not, for I am saved. But when I see Jesus in heaven I should not like him to say, 'Isaac, it was a very little thing I asked of you; did you not love me enough to do it?'" It is the non-essentiality of the precept which makes it such an important test of obedience.

We do not intend to place Scripture on a lower level than

science ; on the contrary, we claim for it the chief place. By science the name and character of the Lord may be dimly read ; but his Word is magnified above all other manifestations, for therein the revelation is more full and clear. Observations made by sunlight are not to be revised by moonlight glances ; the reverse is the correct process. You tell me what you gather from my Father's works ; but I have his mind in his own words, written with his own pen, and I prefer my information to yours.

LIV.

Psalm cxliii. 9.—"I flee unto thee to hide me."

What a mercy it is for us all that David was not an untried man! We have all been enriched by his painful experience. He was

> "A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

May it not be a blessing to others that we also are tried? If so, ought we not to be right glad to contribute our quota to the benefit of the redeemed family?

David may be our example; let us flee unto God as he did. We shall profit by our foes if we imitate this prudent warrior in his habitual way of escaping from his enemies.

The great point is, however, not only to see what David did, but to do the like promptly, and constantly. What, then, is essential in order to our copying the man of God?

I. A PERCEPTION OF DANGER. No man will flee if he is not afraid; there must be a knowledge and apprehension of danger, or there will be no flight.

1. Men perish in many instances because they have no sense of danger. The noxious air is not observed, the sunken reef is not seen, the train rushes to collision unwarned. Ignorance of danger makes the danger inevitable.

   Men will dare to die without fear of hell.

   Men will sin and have no dread of any ill consequences.

Men will play with an evil habit, and will not believe in its power to enslave them.

Men will toy with a temptation and refuse to see how certain it is to lead them into actual wrongdoing.

2. Every man is really in danger. The sinner is asleep on the top of a mast. Young and old are both in jeopardy. Even the saints are in peril of temptation from many sources.
3. Some dangers are slowly perceived. Those connected with sweet sin, those which grow out of a boastful mind, those which are countenanced by the example of others, etc. The more dangerous the serpent, the less likely to be seen.
4. The spiritual man is led to perceive dangers by inward monitions, by a spiritual sensitiveness which is the result of devotion, by experience, by perceptible declensions, or by observing the effect of certain things upon others.

II. A SENSE OF WEAKNESS. No man will flee for hiding if he feel able to fight the matter through in his own strength.

1. We are all weak and unable to cope with sin.
2. Some think themselves mighty men of valor, but these are among the very weakest of the weak.
3. Past failure should teach us not to trust our own strength.
4. In a deep sense of weakness we are made strong ; in fancied strength lies the worst form of weakness.

III. A PRUDENT FORESIGHT. "I flee unto thee to hide me."

1. He would not venture into the danger or wait till it overtook him ; but he took time by the forelock and fled. Often this is the highest form of courage.
2. Escape through *fear* is admirable prudence. It is not a mean motive ; for Noah, "moved by fear, prepared an ark."

3. While we *can* flee we should ; for time may come when we shall be unable. David says, "I flee ;" he means —"I am fleeing, I always do flee unto thee, my God."

A man should not live like a beast, who sees no further than the meadow in which he feeds. He should foresee evil and hide himself ; for this is common prudence. Prov. xxii. 3.

IV. A SOLID CONFIDENCE. "To thee to hide me." He was sure :

1. That there was safety in God.
2. That he might flee to God.
3. That he might flee there and then.

V. AN ACTIVE FAITH. He did not lie passive, but aroused himself.

This may be clearly seen :

1. In his fleeing to God. Directness, speed, eagerness.
2. In his after-prayers. "Teach me to do thy will ; lead me ; quicken me." See verses following the text.

Expect your share of enemies, and prepare for them.

Secure your best friend. Be reconciled to him in Christ Jesus.

Make constant use of him. Flee to him at all times.

FEATHERS FOR WINGS.

From some sins there is no safety but in flight. Our French school book represented Mentor as saying to his pupil in the court of Calypso, "Fly, Telemaque ; there remains no other mode of conquest but by flight !" "Flee youthful lusts ;" they are not to be wrestled with, but fled from. Flight being thus needful, whither shall we flee but to our God ? Who will so surely welcome, so securely defend, so permanently enter-

tain? As the bird to its nest, and the coney to its rock, let us flee unto our God that we may be secure from every foe.

God's people often find by experience that the places of their protection are places of destruction. Well, when all other places fail, Christ will not fail. See how it was with David. Ps. cxlii. 4, 5. But when his hiding-place at Ziklag was gone, yet his Saviour was not gone; "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God." 1 Sam. xxx. 6. It is a mighty encouragement to believers that Christ is a hiding-place. 1. He is a safe and strong hiding-place (Is. xxxiii. 16); Christ is a rock, and he that is in Christ is in the munitions of rocks. 2. He is a large hiding place; there is room enough for his elect; his skirt is large. 3. He is a hiding-place to the soul as well as to the body. 4. He hath undertaken to hide us; God hath committed all his elect to Christ, that he should hide them.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Under the influence of great fear the most timid creatures have sometimes fled to men for security. We have heard of a dove flying into a lady's bosom to escape from a hawk, and even of a hare running to a man for shelter. The confidence of the feeble secures the guardianship of the strong. He would be brutal indeed who would refuse protection to such simple reliance. Surely, if in our need we fly into the bosom of our God, we may be sure that love and majesty will unitedly smile upon us. There can be no question of that man's security who challenges by his faith the protection of the God of love. "He has trusted me and I will not fail him," has been the resolve of many an honorable man; how much more will it be the determination of the Lord!

A little party assembled in a shepherd's house in Nithsdale to hear Mr. Peden expound the Word of God. While thus engaged, the bleating of a sheep was heard. The noise disturbed the little congregation, and the shepherd was obliged to go out and drive the sheep away. While so engaged, he lifted up his eyes and saw, at a distance, horse-soldiers coming

toward his cottage. He hastened back to give the alarm. All instantly dispersed and hid themselves. Mr. Peden betook himself to the Cleft of the Rock, the Cave of Garrickfells, and soon the clatter of horses' hoofs and the ring of armor told him that his foes were at hand. But safe in the Cleft he sat unmoved, and through an opening saw them gallop past, without any suspicion that he whose life they sought was so near. —*From "Sunday Readings," by James Large.*

LV.

Proverbs xv. 19.—"The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain."

It has been said that the shrewdness of the Scotch nation is owing to the pretty general study of the Book of Proverbs in that country. Of this I am not a judge; but certainly, if carefully followed, the Proverbs of Solomon make men wise for this world with a high order of prudence. God would have his people wise. There is no credit in being a fool, even if you have the grace of God in your heart. To me it seems a duty to make as much of myself as I can, since I am a servant of the Lord; I do not want everybody to think that all my Lord's children are short of wit. In meditating upon this two-leaved proverb, we shall:

I. Take the text in its temporal bearings.

1. It is clear from the apposition that a slothful man is the opposite of righteous. Certainly he is so. His sins of omission abound. He breaks his word, he vexes others, Satan finds him mischief to do; he is, in fact, ready for every bad word and work.
2. It is not enough to be diligent unless we are righteous; for though the curse is to the idle, the blessing is not to the active, but to the righteous. It is diligence in the service of God, under the Holy Spirit, which wins the reward of God.
3. A slothful man's way is not desirable. "A hedge of thorns."

It is difficult in his own apprehension ; a rough and thorny road, and he cannot have too little of it. He would sooner look at it a month than run in it an hour.

It becomes really thorny erelong. His neglects hedge him up, involve him in difficulties, bring losses, and create hindrances.

It becomes painful ; he is poor, mistrusted, harshly dealt with by weary creditors, and at last without a livelihood.

It becomes blocked up ; he does not know where to turn ; he cannot dig, and he tries begging. Laziness gets little pity, and charity itself repels it.

4. A righteous man's way is under a blessing.

It becomes plain as he proceeds in it diligently.

God makes it so.

He makes it so himself.

Other people become willing to aid him, or, at least, to trust him, employ him, and recommend him.

II. TAKE THE TEXT IN ITS SPIRITUAL BEARINGS.

1. The spiritual sluggard.

Takes the way of indifference, carelessness, indecision, and unbelief ; and this, though it may seem easy, is as full of sorrow as a thorn-hedge is full of pricking points.

He will have his own way ; and self-will and obstinacy are briar-hedges indeed ; besides, his frowardness provokes others to oppose him, and the thorns thicken.

He chooses the way of sin, and he soon finds it full of sorrows, difficulties, perplexities, entanglements, and snares.

By his evil ways, and the inevitable consequences of his sins, he is shut out from God and heaven.

2. The righteous man.

His way is that of faith and obedience.

It has its impediments; these are swept away.

It is frequently mysterious; but it is cleared up.

It is sometimes hilly; but it is the King's highway,

Wherein we are right.

Wherein we are protected.

Wherein we are secured of a blessed end.

Are you wonderfully easy in religion, taking things as they come, in a slovenly way? Then your way will soon become a hedge of thorns. Neglect is quite sufficient to produce an immense crop of thorns and briars.

Do you seek to be righteous? Do you love holiness? Do you know Christ as your Way? Then go on without fear; for your way will be made plain, and your end will be peace. Ps. xxxvii. 37.

CONFIRMATIONS.

"The way of the slothful man," the course which the sluggard taketh in going about his affairs, "is as a hedge of thorns," is slow and hard; for he goeth creeping about his business, yea, his fears and griefs prick him and stay him like thorns and briars. "But the path of the righteous is as a paved causeway." The order which the godly man taketh is most plain and easy, who so readily and lustily runneth on in the works of his calling as if he walked on a paved causeway. —*P. Muffet.*

Who can tell the pains which lazy people take? the muddles into which they bring themselves? They are driven to falsehood to excuse their sloth, and one lie leads on to more. Then they scheme and plot, and become dishonest. I knew one who fell out with hard work, and soon he fell in with drink and lost his position. Since then, to earn a scanty livelihood he has had to work ten times as much as was required of him in his better days, and he has hardly had a shoe to his foot,

Meanwhile, a simple, plodding man has gone onward and upward, favored, as he confesses, by Providence; but, best of all, upheld by his integrity and industry; to him there has been success and happiness. He works hard, but his lot is ease itself compared with the portion of the sluggard.

Nobody rides to heaven on a feather bed. Grace has made a road to heaven for sinners, but it does not suit sluggards. Those who reach the celestial city are pilgrims and not lie-a-beds. Neglect is a sure way to hell; but we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, and so run that we may obtain. If you let your farm alone it will be overrun with weeds, and if your heart be let alone it will be eaten up with sins. Nothing comes of sloth but rags and poverty here, and damnation hereafter. Let idlers in Zion note this.

It is wonderful how difficulties vanish from the path of the righteous! In travelling up the Rhine you appear to be landlocked, but as the steamer proceeds you perceive a clear passage; a sudden bend enables you to see the opening between the hills. The road of Israel seemed blocked at the Red Sea, and again at the Jordan; but as they were following the Divine Leader, he made a way for them through the waters. Old Roman roads are still visible which were thrown up along the sides of hills and across valleys; these were plain enough to be followed by the least-familiar traveller; even so hath the Lord cast up the road-way of his people, and they shall not miss it. "The way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

The spiritually negligent involve themselves in much sorrow. Neglecting prayer and other means of grace, they seek spiritual ease; but if they are God's children they do not find it, but sow for themselves abundant thorns of regret and depression. I know of a surety that the diligent Christian is the only happy Christian. True religion is above all other things a business which is not only worth doing, but is worth doing well. High farming in the fields of the soul is the only farming which pays.

LVI.

Prov. xvi. 2.—"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits."

Occasionally in seasons of collapse and disaster great discoveries are made concerning those who appeared to be commercially sound but turn out to be rotten. Then the whole machinery of financing is laid bare, and things which directors and managers have thought to be right have been seen to be utter robbery. All looked solid and substantial until the inevitable crash came, and then no man felt that he could trust his neighbor. No doubt these schemers thought their ways "clean," but the event discovered their dirty hands.

Spiritual failures of like kind occur in the church. Great reputations explode, high professions dissolve. Men readily cajole themselves into the belief that they are right, and are doing right. They misapply Scripture, misinterpret providence, and, in general, turn things upside down; but the inexorable judgment overtakes them; a weighing time comes and their professions are exposed. Niagara is at the end of the fatal rapid of self-deception; the self-satisfied pretender descends with a plunge to sure destruction.

Let us practically consider some of the "ways" which appear to be "clean," but are not so, when the Lord comes to weigh the spirits.

I. The ways of the openly wicked. Many of these are "clean" in their own eyes.

To effect this self-deception:

They give pretty names to sin.

They think ill of others, making them out to be much worse than themselves, and finding in this an excuse for themselves.

They claim to have many admirable qualities, and fine points.

They urge that if imperfect they cannot help it.

They also seriously resolve to amend; but never do so.

Men do with themselves as financiers do with companies:

They put down doubtful assets as certain property.

They reckon expectations as receipts.

They tear out pages from the account-book.

They conceal damaging facts and ruinous entanglements.

They cook the accounts in all sorts of ways, and make groundless promises.

The Lord's trial will be thorough and decisive. He weighs with accurate balances and weights; and he looks not only to the open way but to the inner spirit.

II. The ways of the godless.

These often boast that they are better than the religious.

They pretend that their superior intellects prevent their being believers; they must doubt because they are clever.

They extol regard to the second table of the Law as being far more important than any service rendered to God himself.

They will not be held accountable for their creed, or be judged for rejecting a few crabbed dogmas.

But all these shall be weighed in the balances and found wanting.

III. The ways of the outward religionist. These seem "clean."

His observance of ceremonies.

His regular attendance at worship.

His open profession of religion.

His generosity to the cause, and general interest in good things.

Thus ministers, deacons, members, etc., may boast, and yet when the Lord weighs their spirits they may be castaways.

IV. THE WAYS OF THE COVETOUS PROFESSOR. His ways are specially "clean."

His greed keeps him from expensive sins, and therefore he gives himself credit for self-denial.

He stints the cause of God and the poor.

He oppresses his workmen in their wages.

He makes hard bargains, drives debtors to extremes, takes undue advantage, and is a skinflint to all around him.

The Lord says of him, "covetousness which is idolatry."

V. THE WAYS OF THE WORLDLY PROFESSOR. He thinks himself "clean." Let him honestly consider whether he is "clean":

In his secret life? In his private and hidden indulgences?

In his pleasures and amusements?

In his company and conversation?

In his forsaken closet, forgotten Bible, lukewarm religion, etc.

What a revelation when the weighing of his spirit comes!

VI. THE WAYS OF THE SECURE BACKSLIDER. He dreams that his way is "clean," when a little observation will show him many miry places:

Decline in private prayer. Job xv. 4.

Sin gradually getting the upper hand. Jer. xiv. 10.

Conversation scantily spiritual. Eph. v. 4.

Scriptures little read. Hos. viii. 12.

Heart growing hard. Heb. iii. 13.

Religion almost destitute of life. Rev. iii. 1.

Pride cropping up in many directions. Deut. viii. 14.

The Lord gives him a weighing in trial and temptation; then there follows an opening-up of deceit and hypocrisy.

VII. THE WAYS OF THE DECEIVED MAN. He writes pleasant things for himself, and yet all the while he is a spiritual bankrupt.

Failed in true faith in Jesus.
Failed in real regeneration.
Failed in heart-work and soul-service for the Lord.
Failed forever. *Will our hearer do this?*

COMPARISONS.

How beautiful all things look when winter has bleached them! What a royal bed is to be seen in yonder corner! The coverlet is whiter than any fuller on earth could white it! Here might an angel take his rest, and rise as pure as when he reclined upon it. Pshaw! it is a dunghill, and nothing more.

All the ships that came into the harbor were claimed by one person in the city. He walked the quay with a right royal air, talked largely about owning a navy, and swaggered quite sufficiently had it been so. How came he to be so wealthy? Listen, he is a madman. He has persuaded himself into this folly, but in truth he has not a tub to call his own. What absurdity! Are not many the victims of even worse self-deception? They are rich and increased in goods according to their own notion; yet they are naked, and poor, and miserable.

"This must be the right way, see how smooht it is! How many feet have trodden it!" Alas! that is precisely the mark of the broad road which leadeth to destruction.

"But see how it winds about, and what a variety of directions it takes! It is no bigot's unbending line." Just so;

therein it proves itself to be the wrong road ; for truth is one and unchanging.

"But I like it so much." This also is suspicious ; for what an unrenewed man is so fond of is probably an evil thing. Hearts go after that which is like themselves, and graceless men love graceless ways.

"Would you have me go that narrow and rough road?" Yes, we would ; for it leadeth unto life ; and though few there be that find it, yet those who do so declare that it is a way of pleasantness. It is better to follow a rough road to heaven than a smooth road to hell.

LVII.

Prov. xxi. 2.—"The Lord pondereth the hearts."

The heart among the Hebrews is regarded as the source of wit, understanding, courage, grief, pleasure, and love. We generally confine it to the emotions, and especially the affections, and, indeed, these are so important and influential that we may well call them the heart of a man's life.

Now *we* cannot read the heart, much less ponder or weigh it. We can only judge our fellow-men by their actions; but of motive and actual condition before God we cannot form a true estimate, nor need we do so. This, however, the Lord can do as easily as a goldsmith judges silver and gold by weight. He knows all things, but he is pleased to show us the strictness of his examination by the use of the metaphor of weighing. He takes nothing for granted, he is not swayed by public opinion or moved by loud profession; he brings everything to the scale, as men do with precious things, or with articles in which they suspect deception. The Lord's tests are thorough and exact. The shekel of the sanctuary was double that which was used for common weighings, so at least the Rabbis tell us; those who profess to be saints are expected to do more than others. The sanctuary shekel was the standard to which all common weights ought to be conformed. The law of the Lord is the standard of morals. The balances of God are always in order, always true and exact.

I. The weighing of hearts.

1. God has already performed it. Every man's purpose, thought, word, and action is put upon the scale at

the first moment of its existence. God is not at any instant deceived.

2. The law under which we live daily weighs us in public and in private, and by our disobedience discovers the short weight of our nature, the defect of our heart.
3. Trials form an important order of tests. Impatience, rebellion, despair, backsliding, apostasy, have followed upon severe affliction or persecution.
4. Prosperity, honor, ease, success, are scales in which many are found wanting. Praise arouses pride, riches create worldliness, and a man's deficiencies are found out. Prov. xxvii. 21.
5. Great crises in our own lives, in families, in religious thought, in public affairs, etc. are weights and scales. A man's heart can hardly be guessed at when all goes on steadily.
6. Truth is ever heart-searching. Some left Jesus when he preached a certain doctrine. Hearts are weighed by their treatment of the truth. When they refuse God's word that word condemns them.
7. The moment after death, and specially the general judgment, will be heart-weighing times.

II. THE HEARTS WHICH ARE WEIGHED.

They greatly vary, but they may be divided roughly into three classes, upon which we will dwell, hoping that our hearers will judge themselves.

1. *Hearts which are found wanting at once.*

The natural heart. All who have been unchanged come under this; even "the good-hearted man at bottom."

The double heart. Undecided, double-minded, false. "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty." Hosea x. 2.

The heartless heart. No decision, energy, or seriousness. He is "a silly dove without heart." Hosea vii. 7.

The perverse heart. Rebellious, wilful, sinful.

The unstable heart. Impressions forgotten, promises broken, etc.

The proud heart. Self-righteous, confident, arrogant, defiant.

The hard heart. Unaffected by love or terror. Obstinate. Resisting the power of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Hearts which turn out to be wanting on further weighing.*

"Another heart," such as Saul had. A new phase of feeling, but not a new nature.

A humbled heart, like that of Ahab when Elijah had prophesied his ruin. Humbled, but not humble; turned, but not turned from iniquity.

A deceived heart. Thinks itself good, but is not.

3. *Hearts which are of good weight.*

The trembling heart: penitent, afraid of sin, etc.

The tender heart: sensitive, affectionate, longing.

The broken heart: mourning, pining, humble, lowly.

The pure heart: loving only that which is good and clean, mourning sin in itself and others, sighing for holiness.

The upright heart: true, just, sincere, etc.

The perfect heart: earnest, honest, resolute, consecrated, intent, united, etc.

The fixed heart: resting firmly, abiding steadfastly, etc.

Is your heart ready for the weighing? Have you no fear of the final trial? Is this confidence well founded?

Is Jesus enthroned therein by faith?

If so, you need not fear any weighing.

If not, what will you do when the King sets up the final scales?

SUNDRY HELPS.

Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings, but himself,
That hideous sight, a naked human heart.

— *Young.*

In the reign of King Charles I. the goldsmiths of London had a custom of weighing several sorts of their precious metals before the Privy Council. On this occasion they made use of scales, poised with such exquisite nicety that the beam would turn, the master of the company affirmed, at the two hundredth part of a grain. Noy, the famous attorney-general, replied, "I shall be loath, then, to have all my actions weighed in these scales." "With whom I heartily concur," says the pious Hervey, "in relation to myself; and since the balances of the sanctuary, the balances in God's hand, are infinitely exact, oh! what need have we of the merit and righteousness of Christ, to make us acceptable in his sight, and passable in his esteem."

My balances are just,
My laws are equal weight;
The beam is strong, and thou mayst trust
My steady hand to hold it straight.
Were thine heart equal to the world in sight,
Yet it it were nothing worth, if it should prove too light.
* * * * * * * *
But if thou art asham'd
To find thine heart so light,
And art afraid thou shalt be blam'd,
I'll teach thee how to set it right.
Add to my law my gospel, and there see
My merits thine, and then the scales will equal be.

—*Christopher Harvey, "Schola Cordis."*

In the mythology of the heathen, Momus, the god of fault-finding, is represented as blaming Vulcan, because in the human form, which he had made of clay, he had not placed a window in the breast, by which whatever was done or thought there might easily be brought to light. We do not agree with Momus, neither are we of his mind who desired to have a window in his breast that all men might see his heart. If we had such a window we should pray for shutters, and should keep them closed.

LVIII.

Prov. xxiii. 23.—"Buy the truth, and sell it not."

When describing the pilgrims passing through Vanity Fair, Mr. Bunyan says:

"That which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was, that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares; they cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears and cry, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;' and look upward, signifying that their traffic was in heaven.

"One chanced, mockingly, beholding the carriage of the men, to say unto them, 'What will ye buy?' But they, looking gravely upon him, said, 'We buy the truth.'"

The true Christian is like the merchantman who sought goodly pearls; he sought them to buy them; he bought them with all that he had.

Let us carefully consider

I. The commodity: "the truth."

1. Doctrinal truth. The gospel. The three R's—ruin, redemption, and regeneration. The doctrines of grace. These are the genuine articles; but counterfeits are in the market.

A gospel buyer must learn to discriminate, so as to reject

Salvation without Christ as God.
Pardon without an atoning sacrifice.
Life without the new birth.
Regeneration without faith.
Faith without works.
Safety without perseverance in holiness.

2. Experimental truth. The new birth and the heavenly life are real gems. But of these there are base imitations.

Discriminate between true religion and

Faith without repentance.
Talk without feeling.
Life without struggles.
Confidence without examination.
Perfection without humility.

3. Practical truth. Truth as a matter of act and deed.

Take care not to seem what you are not.
Never do what you are ashamed of.
Never be wilfully ignorant of what you should know.

II. The purchase: "buy the truth." Here let us at once

1. Correct an error. Strictly speaking, truth and grace cannot be either bought or sold. Yet Scripture says, "Buy wine and milk without money and without price."

2. Expound the word. It is fitly chosen; for in order to be saved we should be ready to buy truth if it were to be bought:

To give up every sin, fulfil all righteousnses, and give that we have, if such were the price.

To be right with God by earnest watchfulness as much as if everything depended upon ourselves.

To be ready to endure every test, make every search, etc.

To run every risk, bear every cross, give up every worldly pleasure in order to be true to Jesus.

3. Paraphrase the sentence.

Buy what is *truly* the truth.
Buy *all* the truth.
Buy *only* the truth.
Buy the truth *at any price.*
Buy *now* the truth.

4. Give reasons for the purchase.
   It is in itself most precious.
   You need it at this moment for a thousand useful purposes.
   You will need it in time and in eternity.
5. Direct you to the market.
   "Buy of me," saith Christ.
   The market-day is now on, "Come, buy."
6. Repeat the text: "BUY the truth."
   Not merely hear about it.
   Nor rest content with commending it to others.
   Nor satisfied just to know about it.
   Nor content with heartily wishing for it.
   Nor be content with intending to buy it.
   But, "buy the truth;" down with the cash, conclude the bargain, secure the estate.

III. THE PROHIBITION: "Sell it not." Purchase it as a permanent investment, not to be parted with.

Some sell it for a livelihood; for respectability; for repute of being scientific and thoughtful; to gratify a friend; for the pleasure of sin; for nothing at all but mere wantonness; but you must hold to it as for life itself.

Buy it at any price and sell it at no price.

You still need it.

It has well repaid you hitherto.

You cannot better yourself by bartering it for the whole world.

You are lost without it. Sell it not!

HINTS TO BUYERS.

Solomon bids us "buy the truth," but doth not tell us what it must cost, because we must get it though it be never so dear. We must love it both shining and scorching. Every parcel of

truth is precious as the filings of gold; we must either live with it, or die for it. As Ruth said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part thee and me" (Ruth i. 16, 17); so must gracious spirits say, Where truth goes I will go, and where truth lodges I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part me and truth. A man may lawfully sell his house, land, and jewels, but truth is a jewel that exceeds all price, and must not be sold; it is our heritage. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." Ps. cxix. 111. It is a legacy which our forefathers have bought with their blood, which should make us willing to lay down anything, and to lay out anything, that we may, with the wise merchant in the gospel (Matt. xiii. 45), purchase the precious pearl, which is more worth than heaven and earth, and which will make a man live happy, die comfortably, and reign eternally.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town where this lusty fair is kept; and he that would go to the city, and yet not go through this town, must needs go out of the world. The Prince of princes himself, when here, went through this town to his own country, and that upon a fair-day too. Yea, and as I think, it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this fair, that invited him to buy of its vanities; yea, would have made him lord of the fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town; yea, because he was such a person of honor, Beelzebub had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure that blessed One to cheapen and buy some of his vanities; but he had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities. This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great fair.—*Bunyan.*

LIX.

Prov. xxiii. 26.—"My son, give me thine heart."

It is wisdom that here speaks. Wisdom is but another name for God, or, better still, for the Lord Jesus, who is incarnate wisdom. The request is for the heart, the affections, the centre of our being. "Give me thine heart" is the first, the daily, the chief, the ultimate demand of the good Spirit.

I. Love prompts this request of wisdom.

1. Only love will thus seek love. What cares indifference for the love of others? If it can serve its turn by their hands, their hearts may go where they choose.
2. Only for love would wisdom seek the hearts of such poor things as we are. What service can we render to him whom angels adore? What matters our love or hate to him?
3. Yet wisdom gains a son when the heart is given to it; for no one is a true son who does not love. "He that loveth is born of God."
4. If a son already, God's love bids us become yet more wise by a more complete yielding of the heart to God, to Christ, to wisdom. We cannot push this precept too far.

II. Wisdom persuades us to obey this loving request.

It is for our lasting good to love the Lord and his wisdom.

1. Evil lovers will seek us, and our hearts will be given to one or other. To our ruin or our ennobling the choice will be. He who has the heart has the man.

2. It is well to be engaged with the highest love that we may overcome the lower. God's servant cannot be Satan's slave.
3. It will please God for us to love him ; a father is charmed with the love of his little child. What an honor, a heritage, a heaven, to be allowed to love the Lord !
4. Nothing else can please him. Whatever we do without our hearts will grieve him ; it will be an empty formality. Fish were never offered to God, for they could not come to the altar alive. The heathen reckoned it to be a fatal omen when the heart of the victim was not sound.
5. He deserves our heart, for he made it, he keeps it beating, he cheers it, he bought it, he prepares it for heaven ; he gives heart for heart—his own love for ours.
6. There is no getting wisdom without giving the heart to it. God will not give himself to the heartless. Nothing can be done well unless the heart is thrown into it.

III. LOVE WOULD HAVE US OBEY THE REQUEST WISELY.

At once—give God your heart. Delay is wicked and injurious.

Freely—give God your heart ; it cannot be done else. Force cannot compel love ; the gift must be spontaneous.

Altogether give God your heart. Half a heart is no heart. A divided heart is dead. "God is not the God of the dead."

Once for all give him your heart, and let it remain in his keeping forever.

Where is your heart now ?

What state is it in ? Is it not cold, worldly, restless ?

Come and believe in Jesus, that you may receive power to become a son of God, and serve him with loving heart.

Choice Quotations.

Of all the suitors which come unto you, it seems there is none which hath any title to claim the heart but God, who challengeth it of you, calling you by the name of a son (Mal. i. 6), as if he should say, Thou shalt give it to thy Father, which gave it to thee. Art thou my son? My sons give me their hearts, and by this they know that I am their Father, if I dwell in their hearts, for the heart is the temple of God (1 Cor. vi. 16); therefore, if thou be his son, thou wilt give me thy heart.

Canst thou deny him anything, whose goodness created us, whose favor elected us, whose mercy redeemed us, whose wisdom converted us, whose grace preserved us, whose glory shall glorify us? Oh, "if thou knewest," as Christ said to the woman of Samaria—"if thou knewest who it is that saith unto thee" give me thy heart, thou wouldst say unto him, as Peter did when Christ would wash his feet (John xiii. 9), "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head;" not my heart only, but all my body, and my thoughts, and my words, and my works, and my goods, and my life; take all that thou hast given. . . . If ye ask me, why you should give your hearts to God? I do not answer like the disciples which went for the ass and colt, "The Lord hath need" (Matt. xxi. 3), but you have need. If ever the saying were true (Acts xx. 35), "It is more blessed to give than to take," more blessed are they which do give their hearts to God than they which take possession of the world.—*Henry Smith.*

"My son, give me thine heart." For two reasons: Because, 1. Unless the heart be given, nothing is given. Hosea vii. 14; Matt. xv. 8, 9. 2. If the heart be given, all is given. 2 Chron. xxx. 13–20.—*Hugh Stowell.*

No possible compromise. Now, most people think, if they keep all the best rooms in their hearts swept and garnished for Christ, that they may keep a little chamber in their heart's wall for Belial on his occasional visits; or a three-legged stool for

him in the heart's counting-house ; or a corner for him heart's scullery, where he may lick the dishes. It won't You must cleanse the house of him, as you would of the plague, to the last spot. You must be resolved that as all you have shall be God's, so all you are shall be God's.—*John Ruskin.*

"My guilt is damnable," exclaimed an humble saint, "in withholding my heart ; because I know and believe his love, and what Christ has done to gain my consent—to what?—my own happiness."—*C. Bridges.*

Give thee mine heart? Lord, so I would,
And there's great reason that I should,
If it were worth the having ;
Yet sure thou wilt esteem that good
Which thou hast purchased with thy blood,
And thought it worth thy craving.
* * * * * * * * *
Lord, had I hearts a million,
And myriads in every one
Of choicest loves and fears ;
They were too little to bestow
On thee, to whom I all things owe
I should be in arrears.

Yet, since my heart's the most I have,
And that which thou dost chiefly crave,
Thou shalt not of it miss.
Although I cannot give it so
As I should do, I'll offer it though :
Lord, take it ; here it is.
—*Christopher Harvey, "Schola Cordis."*

It is said that during the persecution of the Papists by Queen Elizabeth, certain of the wealthy Catholics desired to save their lives by an open compliance with her intolerant laws, though they remained Romanists at heart. To their inquiry for direction it is reported that the Pope of that day replied, "Only let them give me their hearts, and they may for this time do as they are compelled to do." Whether the story is true or not, we may be sure that if the evil one can but keep the heart, he cares little what outward religion is practised.

LX.

Prov. xxv. 2.—"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter."

We will first give the usual interpretation. It is God's glory to conceal many things, and the honor of kings to search them out.

But this must be taken in a limited sense. It is not absolutely for God's glory to conceal, or why a revelation at all? Many things it would not be to his glory to conceal. Most mysteries are not so much concealed by any act of God, as hidden from their very nature and from our want of capacity to understand them. The divine nature, the filiation of the Son of God, the complex person of Jesus, the procession of the Holy Ghost, the eternal decrees, and so forth, are not so much to be understood as believed.

But it is true that what is concealed it is for God's glory to conceal.

His eternal purpose as to individuals, who as yet abide in sin.

The future, and especially the day of the second coming.

The connecting link in doctrine, between predestination and free agency, and a thousand other matters. These are concealed, and there is wisdom in the concealment, therefore we need not wish to know.

But to me this seems not to be the meaning.

The antithesis is not complete. It is rather for wise men than kings to search out the secrets of nature and grace. Moreover, the following verse would not allow the antithetical sense.

We will therefore go upon another tack, and first ask, What

things ought kings to search out? Here is the pith of the matter.

When justice is baffled, hoodwinked by bribes, or misled by prejudice, or puzzled by falsehood, it is to a king's damage and dishonor, and he is bound to search the matter to the bottom. A magistrate's honor lies in the discovery of crime, but the glory of God lies in his graciously and justly hiding guilt from view.

With God no search is needful, for he sees all; his glory is to cover that which is plain enough to his eye, to cover it justly and effectually.

I. That it is God's glory to cover sin.

1. The guilt, aggravations, motives, and deceits of a life, the Lord is able to remove forever by the atoning blood.

2. Sin which is known and confessed, he yet can cover so that it shall not be mentioned against us any more forever.

3. He can do this justly through the work of Jesus.

4. He can do this without compensation from the offender himself, because of what the Substitute has done.

5. He can do this without any ill effect on others; no man will think that God connives at sin, seeing he has laid its punishment on Jesus.

6. He can do this without injury to the man himself. He will hate sin none the less because he escapes punishment; but all the more because of the love of the atoning Lamb.

7. He can do this effectually and forever. Sin once put out of sight by the Lord shall never be seen again. Glorious gospel this for guilty ones.

II. This should be a great encouragement to seeking souls.

1. Not to attempt to cover their own sin, since it is God's work to hide their iniquities, and they may leave it with him.

2. To give God glory by believing in his power to conceal sin, even their own crimson sin.

3. To believe that he is willing to do it at this moment for them.

4. To believe at once, so as to have sin covered once for all.

III. This should be a mighty stimulus to saints.

1. To glorify God in covering their sin. Let them talk of pardon with exultation, and tell how the Lord casts sin behind his back, casts it into the depths of the sea, blots it out, and puts it where if it be sought for it cannot be found. Jesus "made an end of sin."

2. To aim at the covering of the sins of others by leading them to Jesus that their souls may be saved from death.

3. To imitate the Lord in forgetting the sins of those who repent. We are to put away forever of any wrong done to ourselves, and to treat converts as if they had not disgraced themselves aforetime. When we see a prodigal let us "bring forth the best robe and put it on him," that all his nakedness may be concealed and his rags forgotten.

Come and lay bare your sin that the Lord may conceal it at once.

Studs of Silver.

Thomas Brooks discussing the question, Whether the sins of the saints shall be publicly declared at the judgment day, argues that they will not. His fifth argument is this: It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression: "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Prov. xix. 11) or to pass by it, as we do by persons or things we know not, or would take no notice of. Now is it the glory of a man to pass over a transgression, and will it not much more be to the glory of Christ silently to pass over the transgressions of his people in that great day? The greater the treasons and rebellions are that a prince passes over and takes no notice of, the more is it his honor and glory; and so doubtless it will be Christ's in that great day, to pass

over all the treasons and rebellions of his people, to take no notice of them, to forget them, as well as to forgive them.

The heathens have long since observed, that in nothing man came nearer to the glory and perfection of God himself than in goodness and clemency. Surely if it be such an honor to man, "to pass over a transgression," it cannot be a dishonor to Christ to pass over the transgressions of his people, he having already buried them in the sea of his blood. Again, said Solomon, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Prov. xxv. 2. And why it should not make for the glory of divine love to conceal the sins of the saints in that great day I know not.

Of this truth we may say, what *Young* says of redemption:

> "A truth so strange! 'twere bold to think it true;
> If not far bolder still to disbelieve."

Mrs. Elizabeth Fry's labors among the female prisoners at Newgate owed much of their success to her tenderness in dealing with them. "I never ask their crimes, for we have all come short," was her quiet reproof to some one curious about a prisoner's offence.

German rationalists, discussing the sins of the patriarchs, were designated by *Dr. Duncan:* "Those Ham-like writers!" He often said, "Let us speak tenderly of the faults of the Old Testament saints."

There is no pardon so complete as that of God. He forgets as well as forgives. He restores to favor, and he does not think he has done enough when he withdraws his anger, for he manifests his love. An act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed concerning the believer's transgressions, neither can any of them be justly charged against him any more. The atonement makes it as just for God to pass by iniquity as it would have been to punish it. The wound is so healed that no scar remains. O Jehovah, who is a God like unto thee? In this glorious forgiveness none can compare with thee.

LXI.

Prov. xxv. 25.—"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

It is only on hot summer days that *we* can appreciate the illustration here employed; for we dwell in a well-watered country where thirst is readily assuaged. Yet we can imagine ourselves in the condition of Hagar, Ishmael, and Samson; or of a caravan in the desert; or of poor sailors in a boat upon the salt sea dying for a draught of water.

When separated from friends by their journeying, or by our own, or when we have a trading interest in foreign ports, or a holy concern in missions, good news from a far country is eminently refreshing.

We shall use the text in three ways.

I. Good news for sinners from God.

Sin put men into a far country, but here is the good news:

1. God remembers you with pity.
2. He has made a way for your return.
3. He has sent a messenger to invite you home.
4. Many have already returned, and are now rejoicing.
5. He has provided all means for bringing you home.
6. You may return at once. "All things are ready."

If this good news be received it will be exceedingly refreshing to thirsty souls. To others it will be commonplace.

II. Good news for saints from heaven.

1. News does come from heaven. By the Spirit's applica-

tion of the Word, and by the sweet whispers of Jesus' love.

2. To keep up this intercourse is most refreshing, and it is very possible; for Jesus delights to commune with us, the Father himself loveth us, and the Holy Spirit abideth with us forever.
3. If for a while suspended, the renewal is sweeter than ever, even as cold water is doubly refreshing to a specially thirsty soul.
4. The news itself may thus be summarized:

The Father on the throne of providence works all things for your good.

The Lord Jesus is interceding, preparing a place for you, and representing you before God.

He will shortly come in his glory.

Many like yourself are with him in the Father's house above.

You are wanted there; they cannot be a perfect family till you are brought home.

Receive this, and feel the attractions of heaven drawing you above the distractions of earth.

III. GOOD NEWS FOR HEAVEN FROM EARTH.

It gives joy to the home circle to hear that:

1. Sinners are repenting.
2. Saints are running their race with holy diligence.
3. Churches are being built up and the gospel is spreading.
4. More saints are ripening and going home.

Let us accept the message of love and be happy in the Lord.

Let us tell the glad tidings to all around.

SCRAPS OF NEWS.

The Hawaiian notions of a future state, where any existed, were peculiarly vague and dismal, and Mr. Ellis says that the

greater part of the people seemed to regard the tidings of *ora loa ia Jesu* (endless life by Jesus) as the most joyful news they had ever heard, "breaking upon them," to use their own phrase, "like light in the morning." "Will my spirit never die? and can this poor weak body live again?" an old chieftain exclaimed, and this delighted surprise seemed the general feeling of the natives.—*From "Six Months in the Sandwich Islands," by Miss Bird.*

Thirst is a blessed thing, if cold water be at hand; cold water is a blessed thing to those who thirst. Needy sinners get, a gracious Saviour gives. When thirst drinks in cold water, when cold water quenches thirst, the giver and the receiver rejoice together. While the redeemed obtain a great refreshment in the act, the Redeemer obtains a greater; for himself was wont to say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—*W. Arnot.*

The words remind us of the scanty intercourse in the old world between wanderers and the home they had left. The craving for tidings in such a case must be as a consuming thirst, the news that quenched it as a refreshing fountain.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

Dr. Field, in his "Journey through the Desert," speaks of being upon Mount Sinai, and writes: "Here in a pass between rocks under a huge granite boulder is a spring of water, which the Arabs say never fails. It was very grateful in the heat of the day, especially as we found snow in a cleft of the rocks, which, added to the natural coldness of the spring, gave us ice-water on Mount Sinai."

LXII.

Prov. xxvii. 10.—"Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not."

A man may have many acquaintances, but he will have few friends; he may count himself happy if he has one who will be faithful to him in time of trouble. If that person has also been kind to his father before him, he should never be slighted, much less alienated. Real friends are to be retained with great care, and, if need be, with great sacrifice. The wisdom of the world teaches this, and inspiration confirms it.

If we rise into a higher sphere, it is much more so. There we have one Friend—the Friend of sinners, who in infinite condescension has called us friends, and has shown that greatest of all love—laying down his life for his friends. To him we must cleave in life and death. To forsake him would be horrible ingratitude.

I. Descriptive title. "Thine own friend and thy father's friend."

1. "Friend;" this implies kindness, attachment, help.
2. "Father's friend;" one who has been faithful, unchanging, patient, wise, and tried, and this in the experience of our own father, on whose judgment we can depend. In many cases the best medical man you can have is the family physician, who knows your parents' constitutions as well as your own. The friend of the family should ever be a welcome guest.
3. "Thine own friend," with whom you have enjoyed converse, in whom you can safely place confidence,

with whom you have common objects, to whom you have made private revelations.

4. Do not forget the other side of friendship; thou must be a friend to him whom thou callest thy friend. "He that hath friends must shew himself friendly."

In all these points our Lord Jesus is the best example of a friend, and it is well for us to set him in the forefront, as a "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." "This is my beloved, and this is my friend."

II. SUGGESTIVE ADVICE. "Forsake not."

1. What it does not suggest. It gives no kind of hint that he will ever forsake us. Hath he not said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"?
2. In what sense can we forsake him? Alas! some professed friends of Jesus become traitors, others follow afar off, grow cold, turn to the world, lose fellowship, do not defend his cause, etc.
3. What seasons tempt us to it? Both prosperity and adversity. Times of spreading heresy, worldliness, infidelity, etc.
4. What is the process of forsaking? Gradual cooling down leads on to utter turning away. By degrees we see his poor people despised, his doctrine doubted, his ways forgotten, his cause no longer aided, and, at last, profession given up.
5. What are the signs of this forsaking? They can be seen in the heart, heard in the conversation, marked in the absence of zeal and liberality, and at length detected in actual sins.
6. What reasons cause forsaking? Pride, deadness of heart, neglect of prayer, love of the world, fear of man, etc.
7. What arguments should prevent it? Our obligations, his faithfulness, our vows, our danger apart from him, etc.

8. What in the end comes of such forsaking?

All manner of evils follow, to ourselves, to his cause, to other friends, to the worldlings around us.

III. CONSEQUENT RESOLVE. I will cleave to him.

Let us cling to Jesus.

In faith, resting alone in him.

In creed, accepting his every teaching.

In confession, declaring our loyalty to him.

In practice, following his footsteps.

In love, abiding in fellowship with him.

Forsake not Christ when he is persecuted and blasphemed.

Forsake him not when the world offers gain, honor, ease, as the price of your defection.

Forsake him not when all men seem to desert him, and the church is decaying and ready to die.

GOOD WORDS.

He hath the substance of all bliss,
To whom a virtuous friend is given;
So sweet harmonious friendship is,
Add but eternity, you'll make it heaven.

—*John Norris.*

Hewitson writes: "I think I know more of Jesus Christ than of any earthly friend." Hence one who knew him well remarked, "One thing struck me in Mr. Hewitson: he seemed to have no gaps, no intervals in his communion with God."—*G. S. Bowes.*

The Prime Minister of Madagascar presiding at a missionary meeting, July 11th, 1878, said, "I don't like to speak about my own father here before you all, but I remember one young woman whom my father taught to read the Bible, and trained to be a Christian. When the persecution came again she was accused, convicted, and sentenced to death for being a Chris-

tian. She was brought here to be thrown over this rock, and at the last moment was offered her life if she would recant. But she refused, crying out, 'No, throw me over, for I am Christ's.' "—*Chronicle of the London Missionary Society.*

We must not forsake our own friend, for that would be to forsake our second self; and we must not forsake our father's friend, for that would make us guilty of a double ingratitude of the basest sort that we can practise toward men. Our fathers' friends, if they are honest, are the best possessions that they can leave us; and if Naboth would not sell, for any price, the inheritance left him by his father, but kept it in spite of an Ahab and a Jezebel, till he was stoned, shall we show such irreverence to the memory of our fathers, as to give up, without any price, the most precious possessions which they have bequeathed us? Solomon carried on his father's friendly intercourse with Hiram, and spared a traitor to his crown and dignity, because he had shared with his father in all his afflictions. Rehoboam would have been a wiser and happier man if he had followed the example and precept of his father.—*Dr. G. Lawson.*

Old family friends. I. Consider some of our father's old friends. 1. The Sabbath. 2. The sanctuary. 3. The Saviour. 4. The Scriptures. II. Consider some reasons for being true to them. 1. Because of what they have done for those who are dear to us. 2. Because of what they promise to do for us. 3. Because of what they have already done for some of us.—*Biblical Museum.*

One day the pulpit of the Rev. G. Cowie, of Huntley, was occupied by a minister who spoke as if the Holy Spirit was not needed either by saints or sinners. After the sermon, Mr. Cowie stood on the pulpit stairs, and said: "Sirs, haud in wi' your auld freen, the Holy Ghost; for if ye ance grieve him awa', ye'll nae get him back sae easy."

LXIII.

Prov. xxvii. 18.—"Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored."

The general rule is that service brings reward. The man tended the fig tree, and it bore him fruit; faithful service usually brings its recompense. Masters, if at all worthy of their position, will honor those servants who do their duty to them.

I. Christ is our Master.

1. Our sole Master. We serve others, that we may serve him; we do not divide our service. "One is your Master, even Christ."
2. Our choice Master. There is not such another in the universe.
3. Our chosen Master. We cheerfully take his yoke; to serve him is to us a kingdom. "I love my Master." Ex. xxi. 5.
4. Our gracious Master; bearing with our faults, cheering us when faint, aiding us when weary, tending us in sickness, instructing us with patience, promising a great reward, etc.
5. Our life Master. Our ear is bored to his door-post; we are his to all eternity.

II. Our business is to serve him.

1. Expressed by the sense of "*keeping the fig tree.*" We are to see to our Lord as a good body-servant watches over his master.

Remaining with him. Never quitting his side, or getting out of communion with him.

Defending him. Allowing none to speak against him, or to injure his honor while we have a tongue in our heads.

Guarding his interests. Making his cause our own, his business our business.

Cherishing his family. Loving the least of them, and laboring for the good of all.

Striving for his objects. Consecrating ourselves to carry out the grand purposes of our Lord, and laying aside everything which would hinder us in this one pursuit.

2. Expressed by the words "*waiteth on his master.*"

Waiting his word. "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." 1 Sam. iii. 9; Ps. lxxxv. 8.

Seeking his smile. "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." Ps. xxxi. 16.

Depending upon him for strength. "Give thy strength unto thy servant." Ps. lxxxvi. 16.

Expecting the fulfilment of his promises. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Ps. cxix. 49.

Consecrated to his service—"body, soul, and spirit." Having no private ends. 1 Chron. xii. 18.

Acquiescent in his will. Ready either to suffer or to labor as he may appoint. Luke xvii. 7–10.

The contrary of this is

Self-seeking. Lusting after honor, wealth, ease, pleasure.

Self-guiding; doing your own will, and yet pretending to serve the Lord.

Self-applauding; robbing our Lord of the glory which belongs to him alone.

III. Our service will bring honor.

1. Among your fellow-servants here below.

2. Even among enemies, who will be forced to admire sincerity and fidelity.
3. From our Lord, who will give us a sweet sense of acceptance even here below.
4. At the judgment day, before the assembled universe.
5. Throughout eternity, among angels and glorified spirits.

Let us grieve that we have not served him better.
Let us repent if we have not served him at all.
Let us pray him to receive us into his service this day.

CONCERNING THE MASTER.

How sweetly doth *My Master* sound! *My Master!*
As ambergris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster;
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrancy, *My Master.*

—*George Herbert.*

"Two aged ministers met one Saturday at a station in Wales as they were going to preach in their respective places on Sunday. 'I hope,' said Mr. Harris, of Merthyr, to Mr. Powell, of Cardiff—'I hope the Great Master will give you his face to-morrow.' 'Well, if he does not,' replied Mr. Powell, 'I will speak well of him behind his back.'"

Rutherford, speaking of how his Lord encouraged him with sweet fellowship while he was serving him, says in his quaint way, "When my Master sends me on his errands, he often gives me a bawbee for myself;" by which he meant that as sure as ever God employed him he gave him a penny for reward, as we do to boys who go upon our errands.

An old Highlander, Hugh Chisholm, was one of the personal attendants of Prince Charles in his wanderings. Lord Monboddo was much attached to this interesting old man, and once proposed to introduce him to his table at dinner, along with some friends of more exalted rank. On mentioning the

scheme to Mr. Colquhoun Grant, one of the proposed party, that gentleman started a number of objections, on the score that poor Chisholm would be embarrassed and uncomfortable in a scene so unusual to him, while some others would feel offended at having the company of a man of mean rank forced upon them. Monboddo heard all Mr. Grant's objections, and then assuming a lofty tone, exclaimed: "Let me relieve you, Mr. Grant; Hugh Chisholm has been in better company than either yours or mine!" The conscience-stricken Jacobin had not another word to say.—*Memoir of Robert Chambers.*

There will be a resurrection of credits, as well as of bodies. We'll have glory enough by and by.—*Richard Sibbes.*

A dog which follows anybody and everybody belongs to no one, and no one cares for it. The more it shows its devotion to its master the greater is the man's attachment to it. In domestic service we should not care to keep a body-servant who spent half his time in waiting upon another employer.

Old and faithful servants grow to look upon all their master's property as their own. One such said, "Here comes our carriage, and there are our dear children coming home from school!" Our Lord Jesus loves to see us feel a fellowship—a community of interests with himself. He makes such service to be its own reward, and adds heaven besides. He will not cast off his old servants, but he will grant them to be with him in his glory, as they have been with him in his humiliation.

LXIV.

Prov. xxix. 25.—"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

We have here a double proverb; each half is true by itself; and, put together, the whole is forcible and full of teaching. He who fears man is in great danger from that very fact; he who trusts in the Lord is in no danger of any sort; trusting in the Lord is the great antidote against the fear of man.

I. HERE IS A VERY COMMON EVIL. "The fear of man bringeth a snare."

1. It is thought by some to be a good; but it is in the best instance doubtful. Even virtue followed through dread of a fellow-creature loses half its beauty, if not more.
2. It leads men into great sins at times, snaring them, and holding them like birds taken by a fowler. Aaron yielded to popular clamor and made the calf. Saul cared more to be honored among the people than to please the Lord. Pilate feared that a charge would reach Cæsar, and so he violated his conscience. Peter denied his Master for fear of a silly maid.
3. It keeps many from conversion; their companions would ridicule, their friends would be annoyed, they might be persecuted, and so they are numbered with the "fearful and unbelieving."
4. It prevents others avowing their faith. They try to go to heaven through a back door. Remember—"With

the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10.

5. It lowers the dignity of good men. David was a poor creature before Achish, and even Father Abraham made but a poor figure when he denied his wife.
6. It holds some believers in equivocal positions. Illustrations are far too abundant. Men fail to carry out their principles for fear of men.
7. It hampers the usefulness of very many ; they dare not speak, or lead the way, though their efforts are greatly needed.
8. It hinders many in duties which require courage. Jonah will not go to Nineveh because he may be thought a false prophet if God forgives that city. Galatian preachers went aside to false doctrine to be considered wise, etc.
9. It is the cause of weakness in the church. It is cowardly, shameful, dishonorable to Jesus, idolatrous, selfish, foolish. It should not be allowed by any man in his own case.

II. HERE IS A VERY PRECIOUS SAFEGUARD. "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

Not slavish fear of man, but childlike trust in the Lord will be the protection of the believer.

1. The truster is safe from fear of man.
   God is with us, therefore we are strong, and need not fear.
   We are determined, and will not fear.
   We pray, and lose our fear.
   We prepare for the worst, and fear vanishes.
2. The truster is safe from the result of man's anger.
   It often never comes. God restrains the persecutor.
   The loss which it inflicts if it does come is less than that which would be caused by cowardice.
   When we trust in God any such loss is joyfully borne.

After all, what is there to fear? What can man do unto us? God being with us, our safety is perfect, continuous, eternal, even though the whole human race should besiege us.

III. HERE IS A VERY GLORIOUS DOCTRINE. We may take in the widest sense the doctrine of the second sentence, "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe:"

From the damning and conquering power of sin.
From the overcoming force of temptation.
From the deadening effect of sorrow.
From the destroying force of Satan.
From death, and hell, and every evil.
From all injury which men can inflict.

Will you fear a worm, or trust your God?
Break the snare in which fear has entangled you.
Enter the palace of safety by the door of trust.

WARNINGS.

The soul that cannot entirely trust God, whether man be pleased or displeased, can never long be true to him; for while you are eyeing man you are losing God, and stabbing religion at the very heart.—*Manton.*

"*Fear of man.*" Grim idol—bloody-mouthed—many souls he has devoured and trampled down into hell! His eyes are full of hatred to Christ's disciples. Scoffs and jeers lurk in his face. The laugh of the scorner growls in his throat. Cast down this idol. This keeps some of you from secret prayer, from worshipping God in your family, from going to lay your case before ministers, from openly confessing Christ. You that have felt God's love and Spirit dash this idol to pieces. Who art thou, that thou should'st be afraid of a man that shall die? "Fear not, thou worm, Jacob." "What have I to do any more with idols?"—*M'Cheyne.*

The difficulties attending an open confession of Christ are the occasion of multitudes making shipwreck of their souls. In many hopeful characters, that Scripture, "the fear of man bringeth a snare," is verified. Cato and the philosophers of Rome honored the gods of their country though unbelievers in the superstitions of their country. Plato was convinced of the unity of God, but durst not own his convictions, but said, "It was a truth, neither easy to find nor safe to own." Even Seneca, the renowned moralist, was forced by temptation to dissemble his convictions, of whom Augustus said, "He worshipped what himself reprehended, and did what himself reproved." At the interruption which was given to the progress of the Reformation by the return of the Papists to power, some, as they went to mass, would exclaim, "Let us go to the common error." Thus, conviction is not conversion where there is no confession of Christ.—*Salter.*

One fire puts out another. Nothing so effectually kills the fear of man as abundance of the fear of God. Faith is an armor to the soul, and, clothed with it, men enter the thick of the battle without fear of wounds. Fear of man deadens conscience, distracts meditation, hinders holy activity, stops the mouth of testimony, and paralyzes the Christian's power. It is a cunning snare which some do not perceive, though they are already taken in it.